

Great Road North

*A journey by land and water, on and off the highway, in search of lonely places and cities, strange tales and the odd characters of tropical Africa.*

BY

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*Photographs taken during the journey are by the author*

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CAPE TOWN

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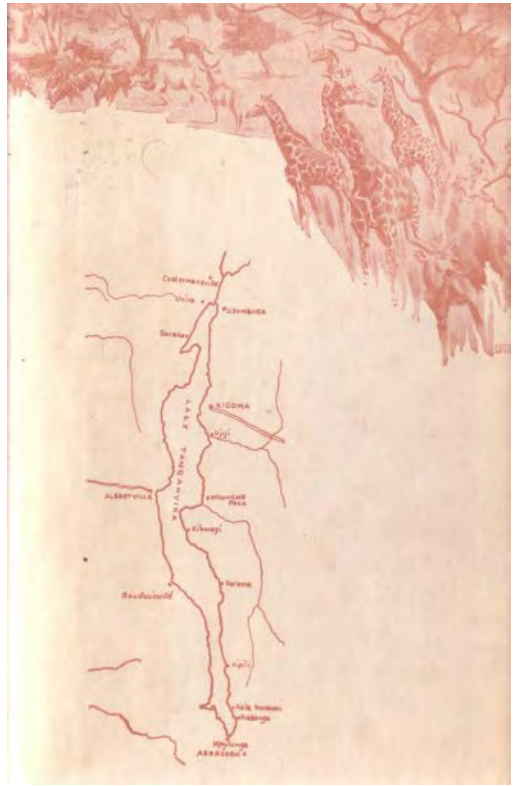
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## Chapter 1

### GREAT NORTH ROAD

THIS is Malindi, the heat is a monster, the mosquito-net a prison. Heavy sleeper though I am at home, there will be no rest for me tonight.

I left the Great North Road and came down here because all my journeys must lead me to the sea. In the tropical bush far inland I swam happily in a lake that had called to me for years. I talked to men who had found the cities intolerable; men who had not only felt the impulse to escape, but had made the break and found their own sorts of freedom in Africa's interior. But for me there must be a limit. The time comes when I must make for the ocean. Tomorrow I shall walk among the ruins of a lost city. Tonight the Great North Road stretches back to the

Cape, a long road of memories old and new.

It was a whim, a queer sort of longing, that forced me out of my arm-chair in Cape Town to wander by train and road and lake steamer, by train and 'bus and train, up the spine of Africa almost to the equator and down to Malindi at last. I started out hesitantly, for I am much too fond of comfort, and sometimes I regretted the impulse. Yet now the journey is more brilliant on the screen of the mind than a thousand dreams.

So now I shall travel the long road again. The hotel has given me a shower-bath, but it will take more than tepid water to wash off the moist heat of Malindi on a night without the monsoon wind. However, I fared well at dinner in spite of the heat. This coast is one vast fish restaurant. Crab

salad and tunny appear on the menu, baby shark and octopus. At dinner I had ground nut soup, truly the soup of Africa, grilled kingfish with anchovy butter, Australian lamb chops, Brussels sprouts from the Kenya highlands, chicken liver savoury and the noble French white wine called Montrachet. But if you think this is keeping me awake you are wrong. Steamy Africa and my memories of the Great North Road will not let me sleep tonight.

Great North Road! Some of my memories go back twenty years to those flights up and down Africa which shaped my whim and brought me to this sweltering room. I can bear the heat and find pleasure in the memories, even at midnight; but the net is a horror and I must throw it back

and risk malaria as I have often done before.

Aircraft flew up and down Africa by day twenty years ago. They were slow and at times they flew low. Thus I have a picture in the storehouse of the brain showing a corridor of Africa from Table Bay to the marshes of Alexandria. I saw a great stretch of Africa that way, but with a sense of frustration. It is like sitting on a railway platform and watching a romantic express train hurtle past your bench. Characters are framed there in the windows, but they belong to another world. Flying is like that. You glimpse the patterns and shapes of places with famous and alluring names, but they might as well form part of the moon for all the good they are to you. If you wish to taste and feel



and hear and smell a country then you must travel on the surface.

I did learn how much bush there is in Africa during those flights long ago. It is not an inspiring panorama, but it is Africa. The mighty scenes, the snow mountains and the lakes, are all the more impressive when they come after hours of grey, unbroken bush horizons and the grey smoke of bush fires. The bush seems dry and empty from the air. Any sign of man – an old clearing, a patch of bananas, a thatched hut – is an event, like a desert oasis. The bush is old Africa untamed. So tonight I remember the bush as I saw it from the air, and the places where the bush gave way to man.

Great North Road! That is one wide, red, dusty sign of man in the interminable bush. I remember the road linking the outposts of Northern

Rhodesia. They say that Northern Rhodesia has only two show-places; the Victoria Falls in the south, Kalambo Falls in the north, and eight hundred miles of bush in between. Have you heard of Kalambo? I prefer the little-known sights of Africa, so you can find your own way to the Victoria Falls and I will take you to Kalambo.

Northern Rhodesia was not all bush between the waterfalls. I caught a glimpse of Broken Hill with the huge fig-tree, where the old-timers gathered, in the centre of the town. I knew something of sprawling Ndola and the copper cities along the Congo border. Kasama was on the old line of flight, and there the air view gave way to an aerodrome where lions and elephants roamed. Every night for

years two Lodestars dropped in, and the hotel owner made a fortune.

But the scene in Northern Rhodesia which really drew me back was Bangweulu. One flight carried me over the vast, shallow lake; another time the pilot, forced down by cloud, gave me swift impressions of the lost world of the Bangweulu swamps.

Bangweulu, to my mind, ranks far above any waterfall. The lake has a hundred miles of open water, sage-green near the shore, then blue. A lake fringed with white beaches or golden sands. The wide mirror of the lake littered with water lilies, white or lilac, and varied occasionally by floating islands of papyrus.

Sometimes the islands are solid, with fields of grain or vivid green cassava leaves. I saw canoes and fishing nets.

Women staring up without dropping the calabashes from their heads. Women with hoes. Sheep and goats and pumpkins. Bundles of firewood and dried fish. Bangweulu, meaning "where the water meets the sky". Bangweulu, where Livingstone died, still firmly believing that these strange and baffling waterways formed the source of the Nile.

Here was true solitude, I thought, an earthly paradise surrounded by the African bush. In the Bangweulu swamps I saw the fires of fishing camps, and the Batwa fishermen gazing at us from their dug-outs. These are primitive men indeed, broad-shouldered, with muscles for paddling canoes; but I knew they were small people, almost like pygmies. I could pick out their beehive huts in a world of water. Lagoon after lagoon

flashed beneath us. Calm channels, walled in by high papyrus and reeds. Three thousand square miles of mud and water, and all of it alive with bright weaver birds, wild duck, and cranes taller than the pygmies.

Sometimes the paths made by hippo or lechwe were plainly marked. South of Bangweulu were treeless flats with grazing for untold thousands of buck. Here the wild creatures were out in the open, eland and roan, zebra and hartbees, dark tsessebe and black lechwe.

I made up my mind to see Bangweulu again with my feet on the earth or in the lake. Then I would take to the Great North Road, crossing the rivers and enduring the bush until I came to Abercorn and Kalambo and another lake, a great lake, Tanganyika.

Great North Road! It will carry you to where the steamer waits at the southern end of Tanganyika. Then the voyage, the remote lake ports where the Germans built forts and castles early this century, as they did in all their colonies.

I remember Tanganyika from the air as another great stretch of bush country. Here, too, are contrasts. One of my pilots went off his course some way to the east so that we might gaze upon the fluted ice cliffs and the crater of Kibo peak on Kilimanjaro. Air currents are treacherous round the summit of Africa's highest mountain, and I think the pilot was a little nervous about his unofficial escapade. Twenty thousand feet and more without oxygen is no laughing matter. Everyone was very quiet. Then ice formation on the wings put an end to

the exploit. The pilot dived fast, and no matter how hard I swallowed it was impossible to keep pace with the sudden changes of pressure. By the time the ice had cracked, all on board had fierce headaches. Nevertheless, this was another spectacle of the Great North Road that I wanted to see at my leisure. But it would be from the plains, not from above the cone of the mountain that the natives call “the House of God”. I must watch Kilimanjaro again, talking to the clouds and the stars.

Great North Road! It would carry me to Nairobi, a night stop on the southward flight. What can you do in one night when you meet an old friend after many years? My friend and I saw the bars, the Stanley and the rest. Willingly I drank with him at polished counters which had reflected wild

episodes in the life of a town with a roaring past.

I disturbed all my fellow air travellers that night, for we were in a dormitory. Next morning the headache was of a different sort from the Kilimanjaro feeling, but I had no regrets. However, I had not seen Nairobi. I wanted to walk in the streets where the pioneers shot the lights out, where hyenas still rummage in the dustbins.

North of Nairobi I shall not go this time, for though the road goes on it ends in the swamps. You can steam through the swamps for three days without seeing a human being apart from your fellow passengers in the river steamer. The swamps are a hot green hell, one part of Africa I saw from the air and did not wish to see again.

So the Great North Road ends in the swamps. I have no intention of going the long way round the swamps, or of turning west and crossing the Sahara, on this journey. After I have seen my old friend in Nairobi, the night mail will carry me to Mombasa and the sea.

Great North Road! As I boarded the train in Cape Town I swore that there would be no flying on this journey. The rattle and the rumble and the click-click-click of a modern railway coach, with dining-car close by, holds no hardships for me. Steam and hot oil, and a whiff of roasting meat or coffee from the narrow kitchen, are the pleasant aromas that reach my coupe. When I pull up the blind, there is one of the thousand views that I have seen and forgotten, seen and forgotten, again and again over the years.

Of course there are other Great North Roads apart from the railway track and the road beside the track. When I first drove by car from Cape Town to Rhodesia four years after World War I there were few signposts and the Limpopo had not yet been bridged. The car, a 1916 model, was hauled through the heavy river sand at Liebig's Drift by donkeys.

That night we broke down somewhere on Liebig's Ranch and set out unarmed through the bush for help. Liebig's was so heavily infested by lions at that time that the redoubtable Yank Allen had been kept busy defending the cattle. Yank tired of counting his bag after two hundred and fifty lions, but he went on shooting. It was tuberculosis that got poor Yank in the end, not a lion. And so the memory of Yank Allen forms

another landmark on the Great North Road.

Nowadays the cars have frightened most of the lions off the highway. Towards the middle of December the Great North Road is a white line of light from the Limpopo to the Cape. At the great bridges a car passes between the girders every thirty seconds. Thousands drive at night on this road that I remember as a veld track.

Great North Road! I am back on the iron road again, with a hot bath on the Bulawayo railway station as a welcome interlude. I still find pleasure in walking to the end of the Bulawayo main platform, longest in all Africa, before my sun downer and dinner.

Two thousand miles from the Cape to the Congo, and the train is curving,

whistling, clattering through the green bush. I knew this run when men wore stained sun-helmets and spoke of the days when Bulawayo was railhead and they walked on to Broken Hill with their carriers. When I first came this way the train changed its character after the magic glimpse of the Victoria Falls. Tourists departed and it became a train of miners, traders, adventurers; dark-bearded Belgians and other yellow, malaria-stricken men of the tropics; Rhodesians and Portuguese and Greeks; men who took a lot of whisky and never forgot their evening quinine. They talked mainly of the dangers of Africa, disease and wild animals. At times they discussed the unknown heroes and other personalities of the lonely places.

“Tsetse? I never worry about tsetse. Carry a lump of raw meat on your back and let them bite that.”

“Yes, I remember the fellow – saw his book, with a picture of a lion eating out of his hand. A dead lion, of course”

“Seven lions came into Broken Hill township. Chap who shot them dragged them into his yard and charged a shilling to see them.”

“Sixty carriers we had – they ate that hippo where it lay. Wonderful what meat-hungry natives will do.”

“The tea-room at Ndola was full up after the bioscope when the leopard dashed in. Man with a six-shooter killed it.”

“I could feel that something was following me, so I set fire to the grass.

They found the spoor in the morning. Lion all right. Must have been trailing me for miles.”

“Don’t let them move you if you go down with blackwater on safari. Tell the boys to build a hut round you. Drink barley water, or rice water. The pioneers believed in gin, but rice water saved me.”

“Pioneers! They had an alcoholic remedy for everything.” Great North Road! Train and road run past the little clearings marked by upright sleepers, where Pauling’s men buried their comrades while the line was moving northwards. The survivors would stare in wonder at the train of today. This dining-car has large oval windows and a continental chef who is proud of his menus. The smart women do not all leave at the Victoria Falls now, for many of them live on the mines along

the Congo border. You will look in vain for game; listen in vain for talk of malaria. But I can still hear of witchdoctors and old wars, African magic and medicine, as the train rushes into the north.

Yes, the Great North Road provided me with many sidelights on the Africa that the white man does not understand. Native remedies still unknown to white science. Aromatic plants that have been gathered by Africans through the centuries. Balsams that cure human ills as surely as the poisons of the sorcerer will destroy a man or an elephant. Stories I can believe and stories which the most willing listener must reject.

If the strange tale survives in Africa and cannot be proved or disproved, it is because the lighting up of the Dark Continent has not gone as far as some

people think. How many people does Africa hold? In some territories, millions still elude the census men. Ask the scientists about the origins of Africa's black and brown races, and they can only give you vague and conflicting theories. Africa's uncounted millions speak seven hundred different languages. Most of those languages have never been properly studied. Cavalcades of people moved over the face of Africa for thousands of years, but the story of those great migrations seems to have been lost.

Primitive man watched the transformation of Africa. The enormous geological dramas which created the Great Rift Valley. The rising of the volcanoes. Rivers starting to flow along their ancient courses. Inland seas taking shape where there had



been only marshes. The disappearance of primeval forests and the spread of waterless deserts. Sometimes the earthquakes must have been so devastating that whole tribes vanished. Animals of many species were separated from their own kind and forced to adapt themselves to new surroundings; for they, too, were victims of the dramatic changes of climate that swept across Africa. A member of the antelope tribe which has long fascinated me, the shy situtunga, must have left the plains, taken to the swamps, and developed the long, pronged hooves which enable it to gain a foothold in reeds and mud. Some large mammals such as the mountain gorilla found refuge in such inaccessible places that they remained undiscovered until the present century. It is possible that

certain reports of "mystery beasts" are true, and that the pygmy species of elephant, rhinoceros and gorilla may still be secured. Reliable observers, a game warden and others, have described a small race of spotted lions in Kenya. Along the Tanganyika coast there prowls another fierce member of the cat tribe (so the natives say), a large killer which is not to be found in zoos or museums. I am prepared to believe that Africa still hides a number of furred or feathered surprises in distant corners; and possibly a few living specimens of forms thought to be extinct.

I doubt whether one-quarter of Africa has been mapped in the way that Europe has been mapped. Not long ago a friend of mine climbed three virgin peaks within a few hours' drive of Cape Town. How can we say that

all Africa has been explored when we do not even know the surface of the land? Africa has been scratched, but we do not yet know Africa.

So that is why I have been travelling again on and off the Great North Road in the lands where the Lodestars cast their shadows long ago. I find charm in the unknown. Moreover, I had an uneasy feeling that an African journey postponed might become impossible even in my time. Within living memory, a white man entered many African territories at the risk of his life. Peace came to Africa, thanks to the efforts of various powers. I am thinking especially of the *Pax Britannica* in tropical Africa. But now that era is ending. I can see the rising of the tide. I know what numbers mean, whatever the colour of the skins may be. The day may come when the

Great North Road will be an unfriendly road for the white traveller. I am not here to tell you whether this or that politician is a hero or a hypocrite; whether one policy will succeed and another fail. Those who try to settle human affairs for a thousand years ahead are as mad as Adolf Hitler. I can only see the rising of the tide, and I travel while I can.

Great North Road! It brought me safely to Nairobi, and now the whole experience belongs to me. No journey is ever like the picture formed in the mind's eye before the start. Scenery, yes; but the people are unpredictable and atmosphere is so elusive that no one can really convey it in words or music or painting. And the contrasts are stupendous. One of my motives for travel is the search for differences, for

ways of life that present contrasts with life at Africa's southern tip.

So here are the White Fathers, those bearded priests with old-fashioned sun-helmets and black rosaries against their white robes. Men who melted their spoons to make bullets when they defended their East African missions against the slave-traders.

Still turning the film of memory, I observe savages who look the part. Tall, copper men carrying bows-and-arrows or spears. They have thin lips and fine noses, and scientists have a theory that these Masai are of the same stock as the original Jews. Truly there are strange legends along the Great North Road of large tribes and small. On the ground I can hear these tales; of Sultan Mkwawa of the Wahehe, whose skull was taken to Germany and returned to his people after many

years; of the weird affair called the Maji-Maji rebellion, when the witchdoctors devised a special potion which would turn German bullets into water. Certainly the Germans had their troubles during their short colonial days in Africa. I never tire of visiting the relics they left; the turreted forts and solid, cool hotels; railway stations like mansions, offices like castles. And always the graves. Where the Germans went there were ruthless campaigns, and they paid heavily for their victories.

So the Great North Road has its ghosts. At one lonely German fort in Tanganyika you will find the barrel of a rifle jutting out of the ramparts. According to legend, the native sentry is there, too, walled up but still holding his rifle, in the tomb made for him by order of the commandant when

he was found asleep on duty. Down in the courtyard is the old baobab where natives were hanged. And below another baobab outside the walls is the grave of a German officer who fell into disgrace of some sort and ended it with his revolver. Solitude is for the strong. There is no knowing how the weak will behave in isolation, or what fate will be theirs.

Great North Road! After what I have seen I do not believe the old Africa is dying. Africa of the lonely places remains almost unchanged. But there is one spectacle, one cavalcade, which has passed in our time and taken with it some of old Africa's romance. I am thinking of the safari porters. Not in the slave days, of course, for those caravans marched unwillingly, and were kept moving by the greatest cruelty that man could inflict on man,

woman and child. I mean the great trade caravans and the safaris of the white explorers and hunters.

They marched often on bush paths made for them by elephant or hippo, narrow paths up and down and across Africa, from Nile to Limpopo, from Atlantic to Indian Ocean. They marched in columns of fifty or a hundred, each party led by a *kilangozi*, a headman who set an example by carrying the heaviest burden, the largest tusk. Behind the *kilangozi* marched the drummer, who kept the porters going when they would have fallen. Six hundred, seven hundred men, each man with a head-load or shoulder-load, rations and water. Seventy pounds to carry, day after day. And they sang as they marched along the Great North Road under the sun.

*Tsokoli-i-i-tsokoli*

*Yo-o-o-o.*

Shoulder loads are moved in unison at the end of a song. All along the line heads jerk aside, the loads shift over with a thump. And at the end of a hard day the *kilangozi* dances for a mile to show his strength and encourage his tired men.

In the great era of opening up East Africa, steamers were carried overland in small parts by the porters. Railways, too, demanded the services of huge armies of men. This was the time when a quarter of a million Africans were marching in single file with their burdens along the bush paths of East Africa every day. That is the Africa that has gone. Africa of the drums, Africa of the songs that the porters sang, has not perished with the coming of the telegraph line and broadcasting.

Lost worlds survive in remote corners. For some there is a deep peace that no aircraft can disturb.

For me there is this intolerable heat which lies over the Malindi coast like a curse. I knew a hotter night in Africa once, in a devilish Sudan outpost called Juba; but I was younger then. They bring the tea-trays early at Malindi, and I am grateful. The time will come when I shall forget the heat and remember only the Great North Road, the road that has brought me too close to the equator.

## CHAPTER 2

### GHOSTS IN THE BUSH

Northern Rhodesia was so malarious early this century that very few of the pioneers who travelled hopefully up the Great North Road remain to tell the tale. When I visited the Copper Belt in the nineteen-thirties, however, I was fortunate in meeting a number of old hands, including two really memorable characters.

It was a cruel land for the few white children, nearly all the children of missionaries. One white child in three died, compared with one white adult in ten.

I have seen a list of missionaries of various religions, Jesuit priests, White Fathers, and the police troopers and explorers, surveyors and traders, who entered Northern Rhodesia before the

end of the South African War. Prospectors and miners were there. Traders arrived in search of concessions or cattle, ivory or rubber. Mariners and engineers were sent by the African Lakes Corporation to launch steamers on the lakes. British South Africa Company officials fought the slave traders, while the police of the same company pursued white outlaws with more or less success. Hunters discovered a new paradise. Belgians, Portuguese and Germans put their noses over their own frontiers to see what was going on. Farmers settled in the wilderness, mainly round about Fort Jameson.

Inevitably there were characters who gained local fame (or notoriety) and nicknames. "Captain Kettle" built a lake steamer. "Zambesi Browne" traded in Barotseland. "One Eye"

McGregor was an Australian cattle-trader.

Blackwater fever was the great killer of those days, though some were trampled by elephants and others were murdered by natives. Medical help was almost unknown. (A Dr. B. F. Bradshaw, formerly a ship's surgeon, was among the pioneers, but he spent most of his time trading and studying birds.) Some places gained evil reputations, like Chiengi, the "haunted boma" on Lake Mweru. One man after another died at the boma, not only from natural causes but sometimes mysteriously. As a result it was closed down before World War I. Re-opened ten years after the war, Chiengi began claiming victims again. One official had a nervous breakdown, the next died from an undiagnosed condition.

They closed Chiengi for good after that.

Northern Rhodesia is a stretch of nearly three hundred thousand square miles of bush country, mainly a plateau about four thousand feet above the sea. Probably the Bushmen were the first to live there, but they had been driven into the Kalahari by invading Bantu tribes when the white missionaries arrived. In African territories farther south the settlers moved in first, and law and order came later. Missionaries and officials paved the way for settlement in inaccessible Northern Rhodesia. The discovery of the Broken Hill and other mines made the country known to the outside world, and the railway was built to serve the mines. Half a century ago there were a thousand white men

living along the railway line from Livingstone to the Congo border.

Copper became a magic word up and down the single line of railway track. Copper moved the capital from Livingstone to Lusaka. Copper transformed Ndola from a wayside station with a boma and a few corrugated iron trading shacks to a modern town at the junction for Roan Antelope and Nkana and Mufulira. And I knew the man who found Roan Antelope and the other great copper mine called Bwana M'Kubwa.

Millions know the Roan Antelope by name. How many realise that a chance shot, a dead buck on a copper outcrop, led to this vast enterprise? Mr. W. C. Collier, the man who fired that dramatic shot, told me his story when he was sixty-four; and I wrote it down



Mr W.C. Collier, pioneer of the Northern Rhodesia copper belt.



in shorthand, like many others, so that it would not be lost.

Bill Collier landed in Cape Town in 1888, a penniless lad of eighteen, and was glad to find work as a warder at the Breakwater Prison. After years of service in the police in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia, and as a soldier in the South African War, he took a partner named O'Donoghue and trekked up into the unmapped country beyond the Zambesi. They were after minerals.

“When we felt ill, will-power pulled us through”, Collier told me. “It was get better or peg out. We had quinine, iodine and Epsom salts – nothing else that I can remember. Fourteen donkeys carried our kit, and my partner and I had three Matabele servants. We nearly lost our donkeys crossing the Zambesi. When we entered the tsetse country, of course,

the donkeys were no good and we had to hire carriers. Bad fellows, those carriers – they had murdered a man named Fairweather before we came. They marched stark naked. Their ideas of personal decoration consisted of knocking out their front teeth and wearing a topknot of hair three feet high that quivered as they walked.”

For months these two prospectors followed the trail that became the Great North Road and lived on the country. Game, meal, fowls and sweet potatoes. At last they came to the village of Chief Kapopo, and found there a hospitable native commissioner named Jones, known to the admiring tribesmen as Bwana M’Kubwa, the “Great Master”.

“Jones treated us so well that when we parted I promised that if I had any luck, the discovery would be named

after him,” Collier went on. “The country was so vast that my partner and I decided to separate. At a village not far from Kapopo’s place I saw the natives using low-grade copper as medicine, dusting it on wounds. But they would not tell me where the copper was to be found. Late that evening, however, an old man promised to give me a clue. He acted as guide next day, and left me with the words: ‘Follow the river and you will find what you are seeking’. Soon afterwards, in June 1902, I saw some roan antelope and shot one. It fell dead on the outcrop which became the Roan Antelope mine.”

Collier did not realize the full importance of his discovery at the time, but he felt that the area was promising. He was hampered by the unwillingness of the natives to lead

him to the sources of their supplies of copper. Chiwala, a powerful chief who had been an Arab slave trader, was anxious to discourage white people from entering the country, and the natives were obeying Chiwala’s orders. Chiwala had settled down near the present Ndola and built an Arab village, with mosque.

“I talked to Chiwala, but learnt nothing of value from the wily old potentate,” Collier said. “It was a strange experience, finding this village of square huts, with pictures of slave dhows painted on the walls, in the bush far from the sea. Chiwala had terrorised the natives over a wide area, and he was still slave-raiding for his own household servants.”

Collier shot a hippo about this time, and while his men were cutting up the meat he found a copper bullet. The

natives declared that the Congo tribes over the border used copper bullets, which pointed to copper deposits. However, Bill Collier went on prospecting in the bush of Northern Rhodesia with hammer and pan; traversing carefully and missing nothing in the areas covered. Three weeks after the Roan Antelope discovery he came upon the huge open working used by Chiwala. This was the rich copper mine which Collier named Bwana M’Kubwa in honour of Jones.

“Some years later a nice old lady told me I must have been pleased to find a rich mine so close to the railway line,” Collier recalled with a smile. “She thought I had just stepped out of the train and made the discovery. I did not tell her that I had left railhead at

Bulawayo seven hundred miles to the south.”

The other Copper Belt pioneer I met was the man who founded Ndola, Mr. J. E. Stephenson, the famous Chirapula Stephenson of the Great North Road, first magistrate ever appointed in this territory.

Chirapula was a regular Allan Quatermain, with a small beard and an air of command which enabled him to keep the upper hand of Chiwala and other slave traders. He shook with silent laughter when I asked him to explain the meaning of his native nickname.

“Four holders and a marker,” replied Chirapula mysteriously at last. “I only had twenty-One askaris with me, you see, and there were no prisons. So I maintained law and order with a cane.

Chirapula means 'beats all'. The government of the Copper Belt cost just over six hundred pounds for the first twelve months after my arrival. Four holders and a marker!"

Chirapula was really a postal sorter and telegraph operator, trained in England, and with experience in the old Cape Government service towards the end of last century. He took part in the Hopetown diamond rush; worked as an hotel cook; almost blew himself to pieces as a miner, and then set off recruiting native labour in Rhodesia for the local gold mines. But he returned thankfully to his old job as telegraphist soon after entering Northern Rhodesia. His appointment as magistrate followed; not because he was qualified for the post, but simply because there was no one else.

It was in August 1900 that young Stephenson started out into the north with his hundred porters and twenty-one askaris. He had a tame baboon, too, two boxes of Snider ammunition, two cases of beads, some axes and hoes. And the genial Jones I have already mentioned, Mr. F. E. F. Jones of Anglesey, was his companion.

Chirapula found that he could travel unmolested in those early years anywhere between the Zambesi and the Luapula rivers. His red hair and blue eyes served as passport. Few natives had seen a white man before, and every village was eager to entertain such a remarkable stranger.

In the Lala country a witchdoctor had prophesied that one day a red-haired god would arrive in company with a lion. Stephenson was identified as the god, and it was said that he had

changed the lion into a baboon! For the rest of his life Chirapula Stephenson received the honours awarded by the Lala people to their chiefs.

When he retired from the government service Chirapula became a hunter and trader. Finally he started a successful citrus farm at Kapiri Muwendika near Broken Hill. Here in the great thatched homestead he called Stonehenge he entertained many travellers; for he was on the Great North Road, and he became renowned for his hospitality.

Chirapula had become a legendary figure long before his death in August 1957. The drums brought hundreds of natives and many white people to the farm; and two hundred tribesmen kept watch round Stonehenge all night before the funeral, wailing the mourning cry of the Lala tribe. The natives loved Chirapula because he

had married first a Nyasaland girl, and then taken as second wife a princess of the Lala royal family. (She died twenty-five years before Chirapula.) So the funeral procession that left Stonehenge was headed by Loti, his first wife, and his son Edward, four daughters and a number of coloured grandchildren. There was no coffin, but the body on the reed mats was covered with the Union Jack. They buried him within forty yards of the Great North Road. A solitary grave in the bush, but one which will not be forgotten.

So the old hands pass on while the pulsing of heavy machinery is heard in the night and the smelters throw a red glare into the sky.

When the great mining companies went into the Northern Rhodesia bush a few years after World War I they

embarked on the largest prospecting venture ever organised. Scores of geologists had to prove first of all that the copper was there. Then they had to map the ore-bearing “horizons” and sink the shafts.

Geologists lived on chickens and game and monkey-nuts for months on end. Natives strung out at regular intervals chipped samples from every rocky outcrop. Pot-holing and diamond-drilling followed. In the survey office at Nkana they showed me the plans of the greatest mine in one of the richest copper-producing areas in the world. Only at one spot did the ore horizon come to the surface just one green-streaked rock which I saw on the Nkana farm, one rock standing sentinel over the buried treasure.

Then I went underground, wearing a helmet and sea-boots and carrying a

miner’s lamp. Three hundred feet, four-fifty and the cage stops. Here are grey catacombs. “Toom-toom-toom” come the blasts of dynamite along the drives, blowing out my lamp. At times my guide stops suddenly. “Always best to wait for a while in a mine if you don’t know exactly what is going on round the corner,” he remarks with a chuckle.

We climb steep ladders and enter undreamt of mazes; we creep over planks bridging dark and terrifying depths; we crouch in tunnels that turn like a rabbit-warren, while I wonder what would happen to a man who lost his sense of direction. I smell finely powdered earth, and acetylene and occasionally the fumes of dynamite which give such unforgettable headaches. But the finest aroma of all is the

coffee on the surface after three hours in the depths where the copper is won.

I remember the smelter at night. Here the furnaces may be seen through blue glass, long furnaces kept white-hot with pulverised fuel. Molten copper runs with a rocket-burst of sparks into a bucket holding twenty-five tons. It is like pouring out a golden cup of tea. When the converter has dealt with it, burning off the sulphur with air, the molten mass goes into moulds and becomes "blister copper", ready for shipment.

Another memory of Nkana ... the miles of clean white huts where ten thousand African men, women and children were living in one huge compound. They came marching in single file across country in those days, following the native paths, eager to find work in the astounding place

the white man had created where only a tangle of bush grew before. And at that time the basic pay was ten shillings a month!

From the Wawemba country and Barotseland they came; from Portuguese colonies to the east and west; from the Congo and the Lakes, from every corner of Rhodesia. Some covered incredible distances on foot. The records showed men from Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Languages were a difficulty, for there are scores of little tribes in Northern Rhodesia alone, offshoots of people driven from their own territories by the wrath of Chaka, some of Zulu stock and some Basuto.

I watched these Africans of many races filing past the steam cookers, drawing their basins of mealie meal and hot beans, and the rations of meat and bananas. Wives and children were

fed by the mine. A native had only to announce that he was married, and his whole family became secure with a roof over their heads.

Dancing to the drums, the favourite entertainment all over tropical Africa, was the chief amusement in the compound. I saw other musical instruments, too, gourds with strings, wooden sounding boards with metal keys, calabashes beaten like xylophones, and queer bamboo contraptions with wires the players twirled against their mouths.

All over the compound I noticed holes scooped out of the ground in neat rows for Chisolo, a sort of draught-board on which beans are used. This is a game known, with variations, over very wide areas of Africa. It holds a special interest for the anthropologist because of the light it throws on old

migrations. I am told that “boards” have been cut into solid rock in far corners of Africa, and the weathering proves that the game was played there many centuries ago.

Among the native foods I observed for sale in the compound were dried caterpillars, sweet potatoes and kassava, gourds of wild honey, and baskets of smoked bream and barbell. Labourers invest in clothing and rolls of material, pots, pans, boxes and suitcases when they leave the mines. I wonder whether the man from Kano still visits the Copper Belt. He used to travel overland at regular intervals, selling the beautiful dyed leather they make in Nigeria’s walled city. That journey of more than two thousand miles revealed the distances Africans were prepared to cover to trade with their fellow Africans.





An old African game, played in the Nkana Compound.

Beyond the smart Copper Belt towns and modern Lusaka, in the distant settlements away from the railway track, you may still find something of the Northern Rhodesia that the pioneers knew.

I drove from Mufulira to Fort Rosebery not long ago by the queer Congo pedicle road, along the border, in and out of Belgian territory. Courteous African officials spoke French (and presumably Flemish) and stamped my passport while Belgian royal personages looked down from the wall.<sup>1</sup> You switched from left to right', right to left, on this run out of Northern Rhodesia and back again after forty miles under the Belgian flag.

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<sup>1</sup> I have an idea that the portraits have been changed since I passed that way. L.G.G.

Lovers of wild life will see pitifully little of it along the arterial roads in Northern Rhodesia, but the lovely trees may provide some consolation. Here are shady giants such as the *msasa*, the tree from which canoes are made, the tree with a bark which the natives use to cure sore eyes and dysentery. There is the Rhodesian ash, growing to seventy feet; and this bark yields fish poison. Pluck the fruit of the snake bean tree, throw it in a pool, and it serves the same purpose; and humans can eat the dead fish without fear. Snake bean timber is used for those African ornaments that help to fill the curio shops.

Leaves of the *mangwe* tree resemble the silver leaves from Table Mountain. Natives crush the leaves and make eye drops, while the roots are used to treat trachoma and stomach ailments. Wild

loquats yield a strong wine. The *waterboom* (with its pleasant aroma when thrown on the camp-fire) has a purple berry which may be turned into vinegar if you possess the old Afrikaans recipe.

Yes, these forests are the medical laboratories and the larders of knowing tribesmen. Suck the seeds of the heartwood tree and you have a tonic. Crush the leaves, and you create an aroma (according to the Bemba people) that will drive any snake out of its hole. Even more valuable in the African pharmacopoeia is the little confetti tree, for the roots, steeped in beer, yield an aphrodisiac. This is also the stick you twirl to make fire by friction.

Rhodesian wattle holds no magic, but the wood is used for carving and the yellow flowers are magnificent in

spring. More spectacular, in a different way, is the umbrella tree. Coates Palgrave, the botanist, described the spikes “like the tentacles of a frightened octopus”. However, the natives make xylophones of this timber. And when they require a dug-out canoe, the trunk of a suitable sausage tree will provide it.

This road through the forest brought me to Fort Rosebery, a government station, junction of three roads leading to the Congo, and clearing house for the great Bangweulu fish trade. (I shall return to weird Bangweulu later as I promised.) Natives talk of Mansa when referring to Fort Rosebery, for the settlement is on the Mansa river. Britain once had a prime minister, Lord Rosebery, who won the Derby three times; but he had no link with the British South Africa Company,

and it is not clear why an outpost in the bush of Northern Rhodesia should have been named after him. Fort Rosebery's only white resident for some time early this century was Mr. H. T. ("Chiana") Harrington. It seems that he was persuaded by the natives to build the boma on its present site because they said the river water at that spot was just what they needed for brewing their beer.

Harrington was in the habit of whistling for the soup when he sat down to his lonely dinner each night. The kitchen was on the far side of the yard. One dark night there was a long delay and Harrington went out to investigate. The cook declared that he had sent the table-boy with the soup tureen as soon as he heard the signal. They picked up the tureen. A lion had carried off the table-boy and the only

signs of him they ever found were the marks of the attack and the lion spoor leading into the bush.

Lions still roam the neighbourhood, but otherwise the settlement is regarded as a healthy place. "We've only had one funeral of a white person in forty years", someone told me proudly. "Of course it is only a small place."

It may be a small place, but when the club was opened not so long ago the convicts in the local gaol complained that they could not get to sleep at night. Too much gaiety at the club over the way.

Native fishermen along the Luapula are seized by crocodiles occasionally. Leopards kill a few people. When the Luapula is in flood, Fort Rosebery may be cut off from road traffic. This

occurred in April 1957, and three tons of meat were flown in.

Fort Rosebery has a game reserve, a tsetse area in the hook of the Luapula, entirely uninhabited on account of the risk of sleeping sickness. In this area of swamp and gravel ridges, acacia and ant heaps, certain of the rarer antelopes, rodents and game birds survive. One animal which is not to be found in many museums is at home in the reserve – the spotted situtunga, rare sub-species of the timid antelope of the swamps.

On to Kasama, that old night-stop on the air route where I did not expect to sleep again. I found the hotel transformed. The place where the barman accepted Egyptian piastres, East African cents or South African shillings now had no bar; it was a government rest-house. A breath of

nostalgia touched me as I thought of those friends of years ago who would never drink at Kasama again. I remembered, too, a mysterious white barman, a man of some culture, who walked off when the bar closed to a distant native hut. And where was the monocled local resident who had sent an elephant's ear to London to be made into a bottle carrier?

I walked down the mango avenue thinking of all these bygone men. In vain I searched for the little swimming pool which had revived me after a long day's flying. I sauntered on to the aerodrome where I might have been killed with everyone else in the Lodestar when the pilot took off stupidly at sweltering noon with too heavy a load for a Central African aerodrome more than four thousand feet above sea level. On this same

Kasama aerodrome, I recalled, one askari sentry had shot another sentry dead one night, having seen a movement, thinking he had encountered a dangerous animal.

For one reason or another Kasama seemed to me to be full of ghosts that night. My mood became no brighter when I discovered the catering system in force at the government rest-house. The woman of each party staying the night invaded the kitchen and handed her food to an African servant known by the glamorous Portuguese title of *capitao*. This harried yet helpful *capitao* would also sell bread, butter, eggs and tinned foods. The cook was supposed to prepare separate meals for all the different parties in the rest-house. After a delay which suggested that he, too, had been carried off by a lion, my tinned sausages and fried

eggs appeared. I was duly thankful, but it was not like the old days.

Kasama looked better in the morning. I was able to wander round the township, whereas I had seen only the roofs during my previous visit. Kasama, built on an escarpment, has something of a view of the Chambesi Valley, and a view is uncommon in Northern Rhodesia.

At the boma I paused to examine the famous seven pounder mountain gun named "May Jackson" after a popular Salisbury barmaid. The gun accompanied the Jameson raiders; it was captured and used against the British during the South African War; then it returned to Rhodesia and was captured by Von Lettow when he took Kasama.

Kasama was a great place in World War I. Military supplies came up by

canoe through the Bangweulu swamps in those days, for the Great North Road was no more than a wagon-track. At Kasama, however, the supplies were sent on to Abercorn in Ford cars. Von Lettow regarded Kasama as an important objective, and he intended to use it as a base for the conquest of Northern Rhodesia.

It was on November 9, 1918, that Von Lettow's forces captured Kasama. So remote was this bush war from the Western Front that no one seemed to realise that World War I was almost at an end. A vivid Irish character named Jack Merry, serving in the British Army as a sergeant, had been ordered to carry out demolition work in the path of the Germans. He blew up a bridge across the Chambesi on the wagon-road between Kasama and Nteko; and in Kasama he made rather

too good a job of it by setting fire not only to the military stores but also to the boma and some private stores. Natives aided the good work by looting, so that when the Germans entered there was not much of value left in Kasama.

Fighting went on round Kasama after the armistice in Europe simply because the news had not yet reached the far north of Northern Rhodesia. Von Lettow's rear-guard was attacked by the British in camp near Kasama on the night of November 12. Only the following day did Von Lettow capture a British motor-cycle dispatch rider, learning from him that the armistice had been signed. He was preparing to cross the Chambesi river by pontoon at the time, where a rubber factory once stood, and British forces were opposing him. Thus it is claimed that

the last shots of World War I were fired in Northern Rhodesia two days after the official armistice.

Jack Merry was to have been decorated for his services earlier in the campaign. When the British returned to Kasama, however, the place was in such a mess that some officer decided that a court-martial would be more appropriate. Jack Merry was acquitted.

Among the Kasama stores which had gone up in smoke, thanks to Jack Merry's eager demolition work, was the African Lakes Corporation building. Make a point of visiting a branch of this remarkable firm if you go to Northern Rhodesia, but in asking the way you must refer to them as the "Mandala stores".

Two young Scottish brothers named John and Fred Moir were the pioneers

of the enterprise about eighty years ago. One of them wore spectacles – "mandala", as many natives in Central Africa say. So the great Mandala stores arose.

As a matter of fact the Moirs were not out to make money. Both held good positions in London; but they were inspired by Livingstone's appeal to business men to open up honest trade that would drive out the slave-traders. They offered their services without pay, went to the Zambesi, and built the first steamers to navigate the river.

The policy of the African Lakes Corporation was to help the missionaries by supplying the natives with the goods they needed at fair prices. They kept the lines of communication with the sea open, and carried out all sorts of useful work which was beyond the scope of the missionaries.



Arab slave-traders with an army five hundred strong raided the Tukuyu district in 1887 and tried to carry off the Konde tribesmen. Karonga, a Mandala station on Lake Nyasa, was attacked. Both the Moirs were in the siege, and both were wounded. Nevertheless, the defenders held out for five days, using smooth-bore muskets. They were relieved by five thousand Konde spearmen, and the Arabs were driven off with heavy losses.

The network of stockaded Mandala stores all the way up to Lake Tanganyika formed valuable outposts in the campaign against slavery. When the last slavers were driven out of Northern Rhodesia at the end of last century, the men of the African Lakes Corporation had done a good deal of the fighting.

It was a wise move on the part of the Moir brothers to design their headquarters building in Blantyre, Nyasaland, as a fort. It had turrets and loopholes and an armoury. The store was under fire during a native rising early this century, the main gates were smashed and lives were lost on both sides. Among the dead was a son of David Livingstone.

Mandala managers acted as diplomats when there was a danger of German colonial expansion along the Nyasaland borders. They persuaded the chiefs to sign treaties which placed them under British protection. This enterprising firm surveyed the railway route between Chiromo and Blantyre. They planted cotton and coffee, tobacco, rubber and tea. In their early years, and long afterwards, they worked salt deposits and conformed

with the native demand for salt as currency. Salt was not easy to secure in Central Africa, but there was a sort of brine at Lake Mweru, too strong for European palates, but greatly to the African taste. Every year they distributed hundreds of tons of this salt. Porters carried rations of salt, knowing that they could exchange it for an evening meal at any village.

When the government needed banks, the Mandala stores imported gold and silver and provided all banking facilities in certain areas up to the end of World War I. They were still in the salt trade for some years after the war ended. Think of this background of old adventure when you buy a tin of biscuits at the Mandala stores.

I heard more stories of the Mandala stores at my next stop, which was Abercorn, the town near the Tangan-

yika border. Abercorn was full of troops for long periods in World War I. Many private soldiers received basic pay of five shillings a day, and very soon they could find nothing to buy. The last item on the shelves of Mandala stores was a case of “Bombay duck”, that peculiar dried fish which goes well with curry, but which is not much use to hungry and thirsty soldiers.

Mandala stores showed enterprise when all the matches had been sold out. They sent down to the Union for a consignment of burning glasses, and so the troops were able to light their pipes once more. An opportunist with a crown-and-anchor board also made a small fortune, but lost it soon afterwards at poker.

Abercorn gained its name because the Duke of Abercorn was president of the

British South Africa Company when the town was laid out seventy years ago. Among the troops who manned the fort were a number of Sikhs. This garrison was intended to prevent the Germans from claiming more territory.

I stayed at the Abercorn Arms Hotel, one of those caravanserais which make up for the absence of luxury by giving the traveller atmosphere, a touch of the old Africa of the outposts.

You will encounter more efficient plumbing at many points along the Great North Road, but you will not find another hotel owned by a former P. and O. Line steward, and with a situtunga head in the bar. (I am fascinated by the situtunga because I have not yet succeeded in coming across a live specimen.) Ted Davis, the owner, is a Cockney who has spent thirty years in Africa and has only

been back to London once, and then for just ten days. Africa is not such a bad place after all.

Then there is Jack Northcott, the handy man, who keeps the hotel from falling down. As a young reporter in Cape Town I used to see Jack Northcott in the boxing ring with such opponents as Carstens or Charlie Price. Jack was Sir William Hoy's motor-driver before World War I, he was a miner, and now he is a well-known personality in this tiny metropolis of the north.

This is another place where old natives still have memories of Arab slave raiders. When the fort was built, the mail runners took four weeks to cover the distance of six hundred miles from Broken Hill. The high plateau here is healthy compared with many places in Northern Rhodesia, but the old hands

took their six or seven grains of quinine a day.

Farmers settled round about Abercorn early this century, and a few of the old hands are still there. Coffee flourished from the start, for this is more like the equatorial lands than South Africa. Cattle do well here. Down at the lake twenty miles away, huge Lake Tanganyika, much rice is grown; and nowadays the fish trade has become a great industry.

Some of the pioneers still talk of the parties that were held in May each year before World War I. Every white settler came in from the district, and the shooting matches and riding, golf, tennis and dancing went on for days. People brought their tents and camped at the boma.

One early party, however, was overshadowed by unexpected death. A young official named Hugh Cleaver went on to the veranda during the festivities and was struck by lightning. Cleaver was the first white man to be buried in Abercorn cemetery.

Stores arrived by ox-wagon from Broken Hill and Kasama, whisky costing five pounds a case. Beer came over the border from German East Africa. Food has never been a problem in a climate where anything from strawberries to mangoes can be grown. Lake Chila, on the outskirts of the town, offers fishing without the danger of crocodiles. Salt pans south of the town attract game. Elephant and lion visit Abercorn now and then, leaving their spoor on the outskirts, among the line of enormous palms growing along the river-bed.

Abercorn suffered heavily in World War I, for the Germans shelled the town, hit the gaol and set fire to the district commissioner's house. I was also shown the doctor's surgery where an Irish doctor named Harold attempted to pull a tooth for the celebrated ivory poacher Mickey Norton when both of them were serving in the army. The doctor had been a rugby international. Mickey Norton was a powerful man. Unfortunately the doctor livened up the aching tooth accidentally with his pliers. Mickey got out of the chair and struck the doctor. The two Irishmen then fought for an hour in the surgery until Mickey knocked out the doctor.

I shall not forget Abercorn and the meals and drinks at the Abercorn Arms Hotel. Grey-gowned priests from the Roman Catholic mission sat

with farmers dressed like Wild West characters and Afrikaners on the staff of the locust control organisation. Beside the situtunga in the bar was a buffalo head and an elephant's tail. But the human specimens at the Abercorn Arms Hotel were always more remarkable than the mammals on the walls.

Abercorn is a long way from anywhere, but somehow you do not notice it. All sorts of people blow in and out. Yet I think even Ted Davis must have been a little startled when he saw a London 'bus pull up outside his hotel a few years ago. Yes, a regular Green Line 'bus still bearing the insignia of the London Passenger Transport Board. An elderly Abercorn couple had turned it into a motor-caravan, shipped it from London to Cape Town, and then driven home in

it. You must really expect any sort of vehicle to arrive now and then if you live anywhere near the Great North Road.

### CHAPTER 3

#### AFRICAN SHANGRI-LA

“BANG-WAY-OOO-LOO”, the natives say. I told you that I would find my way back to this water jungle. So the day came when I awoke at dawn and watched a blood red sunrise as the dust swept across the land. Yes, I had come back after sixteen years to Bangweulu, “where the water meets the sky”.

Bangweulu is one of Africa’s last sanctuaries, a true Shangri-la, a hide-out, a lake full of Robinson Crusoe islands where land and water provide more than enough to eat. Here many frightened little people found refuge from cruel enemies, the warrior tribes and Arab slave traders.

You will find Bangweulu easily enough on the map between the Great North Road and the Congo pedicle

road, between Fort Rosebery and Mpika. It is the only large lake that Northern Rhodesia can claim as her own; the others, Nyasa and Mweru and Tanganyika are shared with neighbouring territories. Bangweulu is a place of a thousand strange tales, and some of them are true.

One tale you are bound to hear long before you reach the lake concerns the primitive races of the swamps. The district commissioner at Fort Rosebery tried to work it off on me as I was leaving. It would have amounted almost to a breach of tradition if he had not done so. “I suppose you know that the swamp people are web-footed”, he remarked, not very hopefully. I assured him that I had heard this undying legend, and that I was looking forward to meeting such interesting specimens.

I saw many large feet, and some weird faces, on the shores of Bangweulu, but I think the joke about the webbed feet has gone on long enough: The story was told with such vivid detail early this century that a secretary for native affairs named Coxhead made a special journey of investigation. His superiors had ordered him to bring back samples, “on the hoof”, as it were. However, the swamp people were even more timid in those days than they are now, and they hid in the bush when the white man arrived.

Count Eric von Rosen, a Swedish anthropologist who visited Bangweulu before World War I, said that the story of webbed feet was invented by other tribes living near the lake. These superior people looked down on the swamp dwellers and told the story as

an insult. He had heard the same tale about the Lukanga swamp tribe.

I met a trader who had gone into the Bangweulu swamps with a motor-launch filled to the gunwales with tin chamber pots. He sold them by the thousand, not for the original purpose but as cooking utensils. And this humourist repeated the legend once more without a smile on his face. When I laughed heartily he stuck to his story. “Deep in the swamps, of course – you have to go right in, where no white man has been before”, he declared firmly. “There you find the web-footed people”.

Yes, it is a legend that will live until Bangweulu runs dry.

When I flew over the lake years ago there were few signs of white settlement. Today the drive of fifty miles



from Fort Rosebery brings you to a European village at Samfya; a cool place on a hill with a government rest house, a district officer, fisheries research station, a fish ranger; twelve white families in residence and a fine beach where white people from the Copper Belt are usually in camp.

Dug-out canoes of many sizes dominate the Bangweulu scene, but at Samfya I saw other and larger craft. Strangest of all is a sort of African motor passenger liner, about sixty feet overall, which plies between Samfya and Kasoma and the lake islands. This large craft, known as the *Lake Express*, was built on the spot by a shrewd African named Luke Mumba. He carries scores of passengers and cargo, and has now become one of the wealthiest Africans in the territory. His buses and motor-trucks run from

Samfya to the Copper Belt loaded with people and fish. The total Bangweulu catch amounts to about four thousand tons a year, so that you can see why Mr. Mumba is so prosperous.

Another motor-boat I visited on the lake was the *Gallilee*, a mission vessel. Built at Bideford in Devon, she was tested on the Dover-Calais run before being shipped for service on this distant lake. So the work Livingstone started in this remote corner is carried on by the *Gallilee*.

Bangweulu has given up most of its secrets since Livingstone's day, but it may still hold a few surprises. Pereira, a Portuguese explorer, reached the Luapula at the end of the eighteenth century; and Lacerda, another Portuguese, was in the neighbourhood about three decades later. Both these explorers missed the lake completely.

Livingstone was fascinated by the intricacies of the Bangweulu waterways when he was there almost a century ago, and he was, of course, the discoverer of the lake. Old natives were still giving their personal memories of Livingstone early this century. They said that when the paddlers refused to cross a wide stretch of open water, Livingstone went alone in a canoe to the west coast of Mbawala Island. This was an achievement in a small, cranky dug-out.

Lieut. Victor Giraud, a French naval officer, reached Bangweulu from Dar-es-Salaam ten years after Livingstone's death. He had a portable boat, but the natives were hostile and he was unable to accomplish much. Long afterwards the natives remembered his bristling moustache.

Bangweulu was still almost unknown in 1890, when the British South Africa Company sent Joseph Thompson there on a surveying expedition. Thompson, a true adventurer, wrote: "Here was a blank space, dear to the heart of the explorer." His efforts were hampered by an outbreak of smallpox, however, and every camp was marked by a porter's grave. He visited Old Chitambo, scene of Livingstone's death, but did not reach the lake.

Only at the end of last century was Lake Bangweulu circumnavigated and mapped. The successful explorer was Poulett Weatherley. He was also a crack shot. Weatherley had lived beside Lake Tanganyika for a year, and knew how to lead an expedition. He had two hundred and fifty carriers, and the steel boat *Vigilant* in sections.



The author on the shore of Lake Bangweulu with the dug-out canoes

Even in those far-off days, when Bangweulu was almost as isolated as Timbuktu, the romantic Weatherley sensed the benevolent peace of the lake. One evening he reached a lake island and wrote in his diary: "Happy little island and happy islanders! War never comes nigh them. They know nothing of the outside world. They seem to wish for nothing. Why should they? They have all they want. May it be centuries before civilisation with its evils finds out and robs them of the peace and contentment they now enjoy."

Weatherley carried a bottle of smelling salts. The natives were so enchanted with this strong perfume that they lined up with gifts of food, asking only for the privilege of another sniff. They thought the smelling salts acted as a charm against sickness.

Adventurous traders of many nations discovered chances of profit round about Bangweulu soon after Weatherley's expedition. Without maps, but with guns and ammunition, they made their way through the country, sending back ivory and rubber. They had to face all the ailments of the tropics, often relying on native remedies when they were gravely ill. Greedy chiefs gazed enviously upon the trade goods they brought with them, and these pioneers had to extricate themselves from tight corners without the aid of a police force. Some of them survived.

Among the early Bangweulu traders were Mickey Norton, the elephant hunter I have already mentioned, and his dubious Austrian partner G. M. Rabinek. Norton, a fine character, had started out in life alone at the age of thirteen as an Irish emigrant in the

United States. He landed in Gape Town at the age of seventeen, served in the Cape Police, moved on to Rhodesia and fought in the Matabele rebellion. Then he became a professional hunter, shooting game to feed the construction gangs on the Beira railway. From there he drifted into Nyasaland and took up elephant hunting. Norton arrived at Bangweulu in search of ivory.

Rabinek had been running a store in Broken Hill. He got out one jump ahead of the police, who wanted him for fraudulent bankruptcy. The no-man's-land of Bangweulu suited Rabinek very well. Later he and Norton secured a rubber concession in the Belgian Congo, with Maurice Green as a third partner. They marched into the Katanga at the head of a trading army of eight hundred

carriers, and it looked as though the three white men would become millionaires. Rabinek, however, went too far in his ivory poaching activities. He was caught red-handed and imprisoned, and the Belgians treated him so badly that he died in gaol. Norton and Green crossed the border just in time, each with a price of one hundred thousand francs on his head. You will hear of Norton again; for he went on along the Great North Road in search of other hunting grounds.

One man who came to know Bangweulu from end to end was the trader J. E. Hughes. He settled there in 1908 and remained for many years. Hughes had been educated at an English public school and Cambridge before joining the B.S.A. Company as an assistant native commissioner. He visited Bangweulu long before leaving

the service, and fell under the spell of these quiet backwaters.

Hughes built himself a mud hut on Mbawala Island, a long, narrow island which I could see from my veranda on Samfya hill. He started the trade in otter skins, which flourished for many years and which has not yet died out. Unfortunately the swamp natives (then, as now) were afraid to cross open water in their shallow little canoes. They were accustomed to calm channels sheltered by reeds. On the lake, a gale raises seas heavy enough to swamp a canoe or even a rowing boat. Breakers crash on the sandy beaches. Squalls and water-spouts are not unknown. So Hughes moved to Chiruwi Island, on the fringe of the swamps, and the little Batwa hunters brought him other skins by the thousand. Hughes added to his income

by acting as one of the pioneer white hunters in that part of Africa, conducting wealthy Englishmen in search of elephant, buffalo and rhinoceros, puku, tsessebe and rare antelope for museums. World War I put an end to that enterprise, and Hughes then organised the water transport of military supplies for the East African campaign. He retired to Port Elizabeth soon after the war ended. But he loved the “Robinson Crusoe life”, as he called it, of the lake, and summed up: “Bangweulu is not over civilised yet, and may be the last to go”.

Probably the first people to discover the food resources of the Bangweulu swamps were the little Batwa fugitives of web-footed legend. They have mixed with the more advanced Unga tribe for many years now; but it is still

possible to identify pure Batwa types among the swamp dwellers.

Batwa means “wild people”. They came from the Congo, a race of small, primitive hunters, undoubtedly close relatives of the Congo pygmies. Ugly, flat-nosed, black people are the Batwa, but with chest muscles any athlete would envy. It is difficult to fix the date of their arrival in the swamps, but they must have been there for hundreds of years when the Unga reached the lake early last century. In those days the Batwa were hunters and fishers pure and simple, and many of them have not altered their way of life much since then. As I said, Bangweulu is a grand place for the Robinson Crusoe life, and the Batwa loved it.

They eat crocodiles and the eggs of crocodiles, thereby earning the contempt of more fastidious tribes

beyond the swamps. A porridge made from the roots of water lilies is always at hand. It is easy to poison the water, regardless of the white man’s law, and bring up a hundred fish in an hour. Black lechwe roam the marshes in enormous herds, and may be driven into nets by the thousand. Situtunga are snared. These people keep a secret. Their traps have no human smell about them to frighten the game.

Batwa people seldom walk. “They have no legs”, the people of other tribes declare. Thus they find it hard going on the rare occasions when they venture out of the swamps. Their feet crack, ankles swell. Other remote tribesmen visit the towns, but the shy Batwa cling to the southern swamps. They remain free from the diseases of civilisation, and their feet do not hurt.

Nowadays the male Batwa may wear a shirt and even a pair of shorts, but many prefer the old leopard skin garb and nearly all the women still wear lechwe skins when they wear anything.

Always the backward Batwa are seen at their best in their canoes. Tiny canoes, so narrow that they paddle them standing up, and balance themselves with a natural grace which belongs to all canoe people. Women paddle as skilfully as the men. They keep them afloat though the freeboard may be only a fraction of an inch. These canoes are designed for calm water, however, and you will not find the Batwa risking their lives on the open waters of the lake. Their canoe timber is heavy. And canoes are expensive. The right trees do not grow in the swamps, and the Batwa have to

rely on other tribes for the expensive timber. It is not so easy to steal a canoe from the lake people nowadays.

Fine swimmers, the hardy Batwa, even in the reeds and papyrus where a man unaccustomed to such growths might be trapped. Von Rosen timed a young Batwa who claimed that he could remain under water for a long time. He came up after forty-two seconds.

This ability to remain under water is useful, for the men bring up bundles of papyrus roots. These roots, when dried and pounded, yield a sweet, snow-white flour. In times of famine, when other tribes perished, the Batwa ate their flour and fish, and survived.

Apparently the Batwa linked up with the Unga because the superior Unga supplied grain meal they had cultivated on the uplands while the



Batwa provided fish. After a time the Batwa asked for an Unga chief, and then the inter-marriage began.

So the Unga settled in the Bangweulu swamps and on the swamp islands, and now there are about ten thousand of them. They do not rank high among the tribes of Northern Rhodesia, but at least they live in proper villages of thatched huts with mud walls and plant the alluvial soil with pumpkins and mealies, cassava and tobacco. They know the intricate waterways and lagoons of the swamps as the Batwa do, and they have become skilled fishermen.

Before and for some time after World War I it was hard for a white man to make contact with the Batwa people. Hughes the trader gave them grey calico, something they had never handled before, and was then able to

engage a Batwa as tracker. Von Rosen the anthropologist was warned by white officials that if the Batwa saw his rifle they would vanish; and if any of his carriers interfered with the Batwa they would feel a fish-spear between the shoulder-blades. Gifts of beads enabled him to study the Batwa.

Once the Batwa built special huts on poles, deep in the swamps, where they could retreat if enemies invaded the patches of hard ground in their swamp sanctuary. They were absolutely safe from slave traders or hostile chiefs; but the Batwa do not build huts on stilts now that they no longer go in fear of their lives.

Like other primitives, the Batwa do not waste any time on elaborate housing. They move about so much that crude reed and grass shelters, built on sand or mud, satisfy their needs.

Often the men live on papyrus rafts while out fishing. Only in fairly recent years have a few of the Batwa become settled on such places as Mbo Island and Kansenga, where they condescend to work gardens.

Bangweulu has an island of elephants and an island of lions. The elephants find their way through the swamps to Minswa Island during the dry season and are cut off completely by the rains. It is a safe retreat for elephants, but a government official who travelled past the island by canoe declared that he would not have gone into the undergrowth there for a fortune.

Perhaps there is a fortune on Minswa Island awaiting some bold spirit. Many elephants must have died there. Hughes, the trader, believed there was an elephant graveyard in the swamps;

not the legendary graveyard, but simply an accumulation of tusks. He declared that many elephants spent their whole lives in that water jungle. Eager though he was to make a profit, he never attempted to recover the ivory.

A prospector who knew that herd told me that the strangest sight he saw at Bangweulu was a fight between an elephant and a python. The elephant was trumpeting in agony, for the python had coiled itself round the trunk and was obviously using full pressure. It was pitiful to watch the elephant pawing the ground and trying to shake off the python. In the end the elephant shook itself free and trampled the python to death. Evidently there was a nest of pythons close by. A python would not be likely to attack an

elephant except in defence of her young.

Batwa hunters use wild onions as bait to trap elephants. They make deep pitfalls covered with sticks and clay. When an elephant, hippo or buffalo has crashed into the pit the hunters gather with their heavy spears.

Many of the swamp islands are in reality large anthills, some covering several acres. The ants have departed owing to changes in the water-table, but on the lake islands there are flourishing colonies of white ants. Driver ants, the fearsome kind that may kill a sleeping human, are only too plentiful on some islands. In the days when savagery went unchecked, men were staked out in the path of the driver ants and left to perish in agony. Even an elephant goes mad with pain

when these biting ants find their way inside the trunk.

Batwa and Unga often bury their dead in the deeper channels of papyrus, and not in the ground. Nsalushi Island, deep in the swamps, is the graveyard of the chiefs. Graves are marked with white crocodile skulls, hippo skulls and antelope horns. A few trees survive on this island, but they are disappearing. Fruit bats roost there, and no tree can bear the weight of thousands of fruit bats indefinitely.

Matongo Island, a sand spit in the Luapula, is the island of lions. Lechwe are often cut off there by the floods, and there are fat-tailed sheep as well. Lions are strong swimmers, especially when there is meat in the offing.

Professor Frank Debenham, who mapped the swamps after World War

II, traced a regular migration route used by lions in the swamps. They follow the buck up the escarpment in the rains and go down to the valleys again in the dry season. They may pass through settlements in the course of these wanderings. Two lions occupied an island only one hundred yards from Chief Kasoma's village, and remained there for three days. The natives remained in their huts, all doors and windows barricaded.

Chishi Island, in the middle of the open lake, is the home of a contented people. They have large, seaworthy canoes; but some of them will tell you they have never seen a lion because they have never left the island. A few snakes have found their way across the water.

Chishi has a treasure in the shape of twenty sacred bars of copper. The

people brought this copper to the island when they settled there late in the eighteenth century and stored it in a special hut. According to legend, any canoe that takes the copper away will sink. Once a party of thieves stole the treasure, and sure enough their canoe went down. The copper was recovered from the shallow water.

Chilubi Island, where the White Fathers have been at work since 1903, is the Babisa stronghold. Bush buck and brown monkeys have found their way there, and so many leopards roam the dense woods that the fat-tailed sheep must be kraaled at night. (Hughes declared that these sheep had learnt to balance themselves in canoes, like their owners.) Once there was a solitary buffalo, but it died in the rinderpest epidemic at the end of last century.

When the monasteries were dissolved in France, the White Fathers on Chilubi were thrown on their own resources. They fared better than their fellows in other remote places. Chilubi provided bananas, which are boiled when green at Bangweulu and eaten in place of potatoes. They shot guinea fowl, snipe and partridge besides the buck and bush pig. Whiteshelled snails were relished by these Frenchmen; and there were edible frogs, too. Over on the mainland it was possible to collect the huge mushrooms called *mbowa*. A wild fruit called *masuku*, as large as a golf ball, appeared in November, and *mukunga*, the wild plum, was not to be despised. December brought the wood pigeons. Brown duck, spurwing geese, quail and other delicious birds made for the lake.

Two women doctors worked at the mission on Chilubi Island for years; and even at the end of World War II they found their living expenses amounted to just under sixpence a head a day. Most of that amount went in paraffin, candles and matches. They grew their own food, even their coffee. And of course there were always the fish.

I saw the fish netted. I watched the canoes from the swamps coming up to the beach at Samfya with fish packed in reed bundles. Scientists at the Samfya fisheries research laboratory showed me bottles containing many Bangweulu fish, and gruesome bottles holding deadly snakes.

All round and about Bangweulu the natives catch more fish than they can eat. Splendid fish it was that I tasted, though I liked it better fresh than dried



I watched the canoes from the swamps coming up to the beach at Samfya with fish packed in reed bundles.

and smoked in the African fashion. Nearly seventy species of fish have been identified in these waters, and six of them are found only in the Bangweulu system. Gabun viper, electric catfish which the Batwa fear, the squeaker with its poisonous spines which proved fatal if the wound turns septic – all these were shown to me in the laboratory.

Tilapia is the finest table-fish in these parts, a bream with excellent flavour. Hughes thought it was equal to a Dover sole. The *sampa*, a cat-fish of weird and repulsive appearance, weighs up to sixty pounds. It is perfectly good, but there are many people, white and black, who cannot tackle a fish with whiskers. Batwa eat it, but they eat crocodiles. Unga will not touch it, and throw it away when they catch it.

*Mbowa* is prized for its fat. Tiger fish are coarse but nourishing. There is *liwansi*, a little silver fish that jumps into canoes; and the *monde*, something like cod. Seldom is there a day when the swamp people do not eat fish with their cassava porridge.

What else is there to keep the pygmies or a Robinson Crusoe alive and jolly? Millet, with stalks growing up to sixteen feet in height, provides not only walls for huts and food, but also *bwalwa* beer. (Of course a Batwa will not grow the crop for this invigorating drink himself, but he will gladly part with his fish for a gourd of it.) Sweet potatoes are plentiful. Honey guides will lead you to great hives of the brown wild honey. Look out for the small *musuka* tree with its dark green leaves, for this tree yields a red fruit

greatly relished by men, monkeys and elephants.

Most of the villages have *mtawa* trees, a willow species, with a bark which is beaten into cloth. Nearly every village grows tobacco. Now and again you may taste hippo meat. Hughes always said that the greatest treat for the Bangweulu epicure was fresh duiker liver, for it tasted like pate de foie gras.

If you ask a Batwa to describe his favourite dish I think he will tell you about the famous Bangweulu stew consisting of monkey meat, manioc, fat ants an inch long, locusts, caterpillars and field mice.

I asked for situtunga meat while I was at Bangweulu, but there was none to be had at that time. This water antelope has defeated many famous

hunters out after "heads"; it is rarely seen by white people and rarely shot. Yet it flourishes in great numbers in the Batwa and Unga domains.

Mr. A. A. Mackie, an experienced East African hunter who was serving as fish ranger at Bangweulu, spoke to me as an authority on the situtunga. "It is fairly common in certain places from Bechuanaland to the Nile, but you can spend a long time finding one", Mackie declared. "The only way to shoot a situtunga is to drive him. Send a line of men across a swamp, patrol the open water with canoes, while you walk along the hard ground down wind. You must get your shot as the situtunga crosses the burnt-off strip between the swamp and the edge of the forest."

No other antelopes are able to pass through some of the papyrus belts in



the Bangweulu swamps. The peculiar, almost freakish splayed hooves make it possible for the situtunga to gain a foothold in the mud.

Mackie had a situtunga head in his office, but he had secured it in Western Tanganyika, not in the Bangweulu swamps. It is still a valuable trophy. Livingstone undoubtedly discovered the situtunga at Bangweulu when he paddled across to Mbawala and Chilubi islands; but his name was not given to the creature because another quarter of a century passed before a scientific identification was obtained. Even today few museums possess specimens of the various species.

Mackie believed there was a very rare, unidentified situtunga species in the Bangweulu swamps, one with horns which displayed less of the spiral twist than the Chobe River species. The

females, he said, were light red instead of chocolate. "They are found in the long swamp grass, not in the papyrus, and they may be the result of a chance cross with another species", he added.

Bangweulu situtunga make their lairs by bending papyrus stems to form a small, dry couch above water-level. Only at night did they venture out to feed. "I have seen many couches, but never one that was occupied", Mackie went on. "Batwa use dogs, like miniature greyhounds, to hunt the situtunga. The dog perches in the bow of the canoe and points when it smells a buck. Then they harry the situtunga into crossing open water and spear him".

Situtunga hair is long and soft, to resist the chills of the marshes. The situtunga and the rare yellow-backed duiker are the only antelopes without

white bellies. Batwa women carry their babies in embroidered situtunga skins.

I think the oldest sign of Old Africa on the shores of Bangweulu is the rock near Samfya which is scored with deep grooves. Rock is unknown in the swamps. So the little canoe folk paddled through their waterways and round the lake to this one spot where they could sharpen their spears and stone implements.

For many of them it would be a voyage of two days. They must have come to this low headland for centuries, driven by necessity and wondering whether they would find enemies there. On a rocky island close by I was shown similar markings. This was another Stone Age site, where the primitive hunters made their tools and weapons of sandstone and quartzite.

Africans living in this corner of Bangweulu have a name for the ancient grooves in the rock. They call it “the writings of the first man”, and perhaps they are right. This is a very different place from the lake that flashed under the aircraft. This is “Bang-way-oo-loo”-”where the water meets the sky”.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HIGHEST WATERFALL

IF I told you that about thirty years ago the highest waterfall in Africa was unmapped and unexplored you might well look at me in wonder. Yet this is substantially correct. I am referring to the Kalambo Falls, which I mentioned earlier as one of the almost unknown sights of Northern Rhodesia. When you travel up the Great North Road go to Kalambo, nineteen miles by the red earth road from Abercorn.

British and German officers surveyed the Kalambo River at the end of last century, and this stream became part of the frontier between Northern Rhodesia and German East Africa, now Tanganyika. Yet strange to say, they never saw the sensational waterfall where the Kalambo River plunges over the escarpment in a sheer drop of

more than seven hundred feet. Rumours of the waterfall reached one or two members of the boundary commission, but they failed to reach the inaccessible gorge.

Years passed, and a British photographer, Mr. James Scott-Brown, passed through Abercorn shortly before World War I and was given some negatives taken not long before by Mr. W. E. Owen, an Abercorn resident. Scott-Brown went on into German territory. He was made prisoner when war broke out, suffered from many attacks of malaria, and died not long after the war. His possessions reached his widow at long last, and among them she found the negatives in an envelope marked as follows: "The Kalambo Falls, most remarkable in the world. Here the Kalambo River takes a



I found Kalambo sensational enough, for I do not enjoy walking to the edge of the precipice.

header over a precipice, making a sheer drop of twelve hundred feet. So far no one has succeeded in reaching the base”.

Mrs Scott-Brown handed the negatives to the Royal Geographical Society in London, and made inquiries. Colonel Sir Charles Close, who had been in charge of the British surveyors on the boundary in 1898, produced his diary. It contained a mention of a very steep gorge near the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, but no word of the waterfall. However, two other members of the party, Lieut. V. H. S. Scratchley (later Colonel Scratchley, D.S.O.), and Corporal (later Captain) Peacock, came forward and declared that natives had told them of a great waterfall in the neighbourhood. They followed the course of the Kalambo River until they were held up by thick

scrub. Another attempt to reach the waterfall by canoe from the lake failed. They paddled up the gorge for some way until the natives said they could go no farther and had never heard of anyone going deeper into the gorge.

“At this point the gorge rose towering above us on each side, so perpendicular as to shut out the light”, reported one of the officers. “Only a half-light showed us our surroundings. No attempt was made to push on, as we were surveying, not exploring, and we had to keep to a time-table. While in the gorge we heard no sound of a fall, but it was very nearly the dry season”.

Captain G. Spicer Simson, R.N., who operated against the Germans on Lake Tanganyika during World War I, informed the Society that he had visited the Kalambo Falls in 1916,

using a well-beaten path. Nevertheless, the falls could not be found on any map.

Publicity given to Mrs Scott-Brown’s pictures by the Royal Geographical Society proved that a number of people were aware of the existence of these unmapped falls. It was impossible to identify any white person as the discoverer. Mr. F. H. Melland, the well-known elephant hunter, claimed to have been to Kalambo in 1912 and taken the first photographs: Some of the Abercorn people were sarcastic about this “discovery” of the waterfall which they had known for years, but the fact remained that not one of them had mapped it or provided an accurate scientific description or made the waterfall known to the outside world.

About this time Mrs Enid Gordon-Gallien, an adventurous woman

member of the Royal Geographical Society, approached the president, Colonel Sir Charles Close, and asked him to suggest a useful expedition. She had just driven her car across the desert to Baghdad and back. Close remembered the unmapped Kalambo Falls and gave her all the available information. The enterprising Mrs Gordon-Gallien landed at Dar-es-Salaam with her well-equipped expedition in June 1928, accompanied by Mr. J. W. Cornwall, a surveyor, and Mr. Colin Rose, geologist. They travelled down Lake Tanganyika by steamer, disembarked at Kasanga, and then marched through the forest to the Kalambo River.

Cairns made by the British and German surveyors three decades earlier were located in the undergrowth. Natives remembered those

military visitors and pointed to old beacons with the words: "There the bwanas set up a telescope." Near the lip of the waterfall they came upon a German frontier post of World War I, with trenches commanding the crossing. Here the Gordon-Gallien party camped for six weeks, until the survey was complete.

They measured the drop carefully and made it seven hundred and five feet, compared with Scott-Brown's twelve hundred. Even seven hundred and five sounds impressive when you remember that the greatest depth of the Victoria Falls is only about three hundred feet. However, Kalambo is a slender waterfall even in times of flood, and cannot be compared with the Victoria Falls as a spectacle.

I found Kalambo sensational enough, for I do not enjoy walking to the edge

of precipices. There is no other way of seeing Kalambo, but I did not remain there for long. As I approached the view point called Chasm Cliff I met several other visitors, who seemed to be alarmed about something. One of the women remarked: "I feel nervous".

She was close to the frightening drop into the gorge and I remarked: "If I was as close to the edge as you are, I would feel nervous."

"It's not that", she replied. "Someone saw a leopard here this afternoon and I heard a sound in that bush where you're standing."

Then I heard the rustling. But I remained where I was. Better a leopard than the cliff. This was the spot which a former acting governor, Sir Charles Dundas, described as the dizziest place he had ever seen in his

life, with the impression of height made even more severe by the mid-air performance of ghoulish marabou storks.

Chasm Cliff allows you to watch the river hurling itself from the Tanganyika plateau almost to lake level. Some people, less timid than I, may see the pool, almost hidden by spray, at the foot of the waterfall. I was content to study the sandstone cliffs of red and other colours; the plants and mosses and foliage encouraged by the rain forest atmosphere round the falls; flowers and ferns and bluebells, lilies and aloes; wild figs growing out over the terrifying space; and the storks going down like helicopters to their ragged nests.

You cannot fail to see the marabou storks that Dundas noted. They are

indeed sinister birds, greatly feared by vultures and other lesser species on account of their powerful bills. The marabou are not often seen in South Africa; but here in this Kalambo gorge is one of their breeding-grounds. They nest on the ledges and go out from there in search of carrion left by lions. I watched them floating in the up currents of air from the falls, giving a performance which I would have appreciated more keenly from the bottom of the gorge. It would be interesting to watch a young stork's first attempt at flight, for the timing would have to be perfect. It would fly or die. I also observed the climbing powers of those untroubled mountaineers, the baboons of the gorge.

Kalambo visitors go not only to Chasm Cliff but also to the lip of the falls. I saw the sluggish little river no

more than forty feet wide flowing through the forest above the falls. Then came an outcrop of old volcanic rock and a foaming torrent. I dared not go on. My friends lay flat and peered over the vertical cliff. They told me there was a curve in the cliff face which prevented a full view of the stupendous waterfall. I was glad to hear that I had not missed much.

Every waterfall in Africa has its legends of chiefs throwing their enemies or criminals over the brink. Kalambo has also a pathetic story, which may be true, of a woman going over the waterfall with her children to certain death rather than fall into the hands of the Arab slave-traders.

Not many visitors reach the foot of the falls. The journey is as difficult today as it was when the British surveyors turned back. However, the Gordon-



Gallien party mapped the whole gorge after measuring the depth of the waterfall.

I am told that the gorge is an eerie place, damp with spray at the foot of the falls. One party found a dead wild pig in the swirling pool. It must have gone over the drop. This part of the gorge is a botanist's paradise, however, and there are rare plants among the wild bananas. A little way downstream there are two more waterfalls, one of fifty feet and another about half that height. The narrow parts, with cliffs a thousand feet high, are weird. Then you come out to the hippo pools and the shining expanse of Lake Tanganyika.

The late Mr. Edward Rashleigh, who knew nearly all the great waterfalls of the world, told me that he was inclined to place the Aughrabies Falls of the

Orange River first on his list. The drop there is nearly five hundred feet. Rashleigh maintained that volume, height and width were the three tests he applied in comparing waterfalls. He could not draw up an order of precedence because of great variations in volume. Rashleigh gazed spell-bound, day after day, at the Victoria Falls. He found inspiration in cataracts and cascades as others do in works of art. "Of all the natural wonders our planet has to show none, perhaps, has made greater appeal to the imagination of mankind in all ages than has the grandeur and beauty of falling water", Rashleigh wrote.

Rashleigh never saw Kalambo, for it required an effort in those days before the airlines opened. I think Rashleigh would have forgiven Kalambo for lack of volume and width if he could have

seen that lovely single shaft of water tumbling in its sheer drop to the foot of the narrow gorge.

Just above the Kalambo Falls is a valley which was once filled by a lake. Old lake beds have been drained by natural processes, revealing some of the most important archaeological relics found in Africa for many years. It was in 1953 that the site was first noticed, and since then several “camping floors”, one above the other, have been excavated. Some of the stone implements were in such good condition that Dr. L. S. B. Leakey skinned a buck with one at a Livingstone congress. The importance of the site lies in the fact that whole tree trunks were preserved there by the water. This timber was found with leaves, charred and trimmed branches, seeds and nuts gathered for their larder

by the primitive hunters. Thus it was possible, by the radio-carbon method, to determine the approximate age of the site. One test gave a date of fifty-three thousand years before the present; another test carried the site back thirty-six thousand years. Never before in Africa had it been possible to carry out such tests with timber.

It appears that the Kalambo people knew how to make fire much earlier than the archaeologists had suspected. Dr. J. Desmond Clark has also deduced from the fossil pollens that the climate was much colder and wetter than it is today. The relics showed that the people were smelting and using iron one thousand or fifteen hundred years ago, at a period when Central Africa was thought to be still in the Stone Age.

Here at Kalambo the Stone Age people lived and mixed with more advanced Iron Age types. They farmed, grew millet, owned humped cattle with long horns, lived in huts, collected wild fruits and honey. The site reveals the closing of the Earlier Stone Age, with its hand-axes and cleavers, hammers and flakes, and the arrival of the Iron Age with its remnants of slag.

Within sight of Kalambo across the lake are the inaccessible Chirombo Falls. Not so many people have seen these falls, for the spectacle demands a climb of two thousand feet which takes about three hours. A coffee planter living nearby, however, can see the crest of the falls from his house.

Chirombo Falls drop over an escarpment like Kalambo and go on towards

the lake as a series of cataracts. The drop at Chirombo is nearly nine hundred feet, but it is not vertical. At about four hundred feet there is a ledge. Below the falls the jungle is so thick that explorers need hatchets. Bird life and blue calobus monkeys add to the charm for those who make the effort.

Rhodesian waterfall lovers would place the Victoria Falls first, Kalambo second, and the little-known Chishimba Falls (near Kasama) a poor third. I saw Chishimba only from the air, a fleeting glimpse of a small main cataract that looks something like a miniature Victoria Falls.

Chishimba is really a series of short but beautiful drops, the main fall going over a ledge into a rocky gorge eighty feet below. Here are wild date palms,

lanias, creepers and fine trees, if you have the time to admire them.

Chishimba, who gave his name to the falls, was a little chief who was extremely proud of his hollow stone lamps holding vegetable oil and wicks. He hid the lamps, but one of his own sons revealed the hiding-place and they were stolen. Life without the lamps was intolerable and Chishimba declared he would throw himself over the main fall. His people, loyal to their chief, burnt their village, threw their possessions into the river, and followed Chishimba when he drowned himself.

It is not the torrent plunging through space that draws me to Kalambo and all the other waterfalls. I like to hear of all those who have shivered on the brink before me, or stood there unafraid. Leopards and marabou storks

take their places in the background. The human figures make the real drama that comes down through untold centuries.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAN VERSUS LION

NOW AND again on this journey I have spoken of the lions that still cross the Great North Road by day and by night. Lions have been exterminated in many lands, and the killing of a wild animal without reason is to destroy something of the beauty and wonder of the wilds. But I think the lion is holding his own in Africa.

India has lost all but a few hundred lions, preserved in one forest. There it is the tiger that menaces human beings. The man-eating lion has never disappeared from tropical Africa, unfortunately, and tales of lions and lion-hunters are still told every day along great stretches of the Great North Road.

Northern Rhodesia claims the most ferocious and the largest lions in Africa. I have found evidence supporting these claims, and before leaving the territory I shall relate some of the stories of man-eaters I heard there.

Books and films have led many people to believe that the notorious man-eaters of Tsavo caused more deaths within a short period than any other lions in Africa. You may remember that these lions killed about one hundred and thirty Africans and Indians who were building the railway line up from Mombasa to Nairobi at the end of last century. When these heavy casualties delayed the construction, a white hunter went to Tsavo to tackle the lions. He was still on board the train, his rifle on the rack, when a lion entered his compartment, dragged him out and killed him.

Northern Rhodesia's lions have a worse record than that. Far up in the north of the territory is the old boma of Chiengi (on Lake Mweru) and about a hundred miles away is Mporokoso. Here, and round about Kasama, the man-eaters have set up a reign of terror at many periods. They have never been defeated, like the Tsavo lions. They are still there.

Chiengi was menaced by a solitary man-eater which became known as Chiengi Chali. This lone killer finished off ninety natives in 1909, and for a long time all attempts to find Chiengi Chali failed. Special precautions were taken at the boma, and all openings in the high brick courtyard were fenced. Yet the marauder leapt inside and was heard grunting outside the bedroom window

of Sealey, the district officer. It escaped before Sealey could shoot.

Guards were posted, fires were lit, but still Chiengi Chali went on killing. Many frightened Africans saw it, and described it as a large beast with a conspicuous pale coat which made it easy to identify. Chiengi Chali broke through the roofs of huts and battered its way through light doors. It seemed to sense the danger of trap-guns, but often took away the bait successfully. A trap-gun got Chiengi Chali in the end, however, and it was found to be a young male with fine teeth. Man-eaters are not always the senile lions of popular belief.

It seems that many natives in Northern Rhodesia regard a notorious man-eating lion as the reincarnation of a dead chief. Thus they are reluctant to hunt the lion, and they are ruled by

superstition to such a degree that they will not always report a killing. In this atmosphere the man-eater may have a long run.

That was the reason for Chiengi Chali's long list of victims. It so happened that an influential old chief had told those who had gathered round his death-bed that he intended to transform himself into a lion and kill his enemies. Chiengi Chali started his raiding just after the chief died. No native in that district would believe it was a coincidence.

The sinister reputation of Mporokoso boma is preserved in an historic note book which the British South Africa Company officials started soon after the station was built in 1898. Full details were given of a series of deaths which might otherwise have been regarded as incredible.

The first white victim at Mporokoso was Mr W. R. Johnstone, an official, before the end of last century. He was known as a careful hunter; and he succeeded in climbing on to a tree branch fifteen feet above the ground when the lion jumped straight up, knocked him off and mauled him. In the days before penicillin, wounds turned septic (owing to the putrid meat on the lion's claws) and few people recovered. Johnstone lingered and died.

According to the book, an average of ten natives a year were killed by lions at Mporokoso. During the 1918 rainy season the name of another white official was entered in the book. He was Mr. E. W. Vellacott. A native ran into his office one day to report that a lion had attacked a woman in the garden. Vellacott rushed out, grabbed

an unfamiliar gun from a prison warder and wounded the lion. Rashly he followed the lion into long grass, whereupon the lion mauled him. A brave native seized the lion's tail and tried to pull it off Vellacott, while another native succeeded in killing the lion with a spear. A doctor from Kasama tried to save Vellacott's life, but death came within a fortnight.

Cullen Gouldsbury, the poet, was mauled by a lion near Mporokoso. He was more fortunate than Vellacott, for he recovered.

A queer thing about the Mporokoso lions was that the whole species in that area appeared to be man-eaters. As a rule, lions have an instinctive fear of man and they will usually retreat if they are not molested. But you never know. Certainly in Northern Rhodesia the lion often treats the human

population with contempt. Africans are notoriously careless in taking precautions against such age-old enemies as the lion and the crocodile; but in the districts terrorised by man-eaters they learnt at last to build stockades round their villages.

One lone man-eater which will never be forgotten in the Kasama district first appeared in 1920, near the mission of the White Fathers at Kapatu. One of the fathers wounded it, but the blood spoor was lost and the lion recovered and killed about eighty natives. This lion was often seen, and was also identified by its tracks. Not until 1922 was it shot while tackling a goat in daylight.

Another terror of the Great North Road was Mishoro Monty, a lion which ravaged the Kasama district between 1926 and 1929, claiming



more than one hundred victims. This man-eater was poisoned.

Then came Namweliyu, the “Cunning One”, boldest of the lot. Namweliyu prowled round Kasama in 1943, entering villages in daylight and carrying off one native after another. It had the peculiar habit of biting off arms and legs so that it could saunter off more easily with the body. Natives were afraid to reap their crops when this pest was in the neighbourhood.

Namweliyu gained its name because it did not return to the scene of a kill, thus avoiding traps. Six government messengers were armed with magazine rifles and sent out in search of the lion. They kept together for safety, and the search failed. Even the most experienced African hunters feared this lion.

Towards the end of its career Namweliyu seized a woman from a hut. The husband followed, and the lion killed both of them. Mr James Lemon, the district officer, then decided to see whether the lion might return to its partly-eaten meal. He climbed a tree and waited. On that one occasion Namweliyu came back and Lemon finished it with two shots. But by that time Namweliyu had killed forty-three natives.

Since the end of World War II the Kasama lions seem to have retreated into the game reserves. Mpika, on the Great North Road, still has a bad reputation, for lions pounce on natives cycling through the bush or walking on the outskirts of villages. As recently as 1954 an African girl was eaten in a school dormitory in that area. For many years the occupants of

one European house used to show visitors a brass doorknob which had been chewed by a lion. Windows were protected with barbed-wire.

Captain C. R. S. Pitman, the distinguished soldier and Uganda game warden, was seconded to Northern Rhodesia between the wars to make a wild life survey. He studied the ferocity of the lions there, and finally admitted that he could find no wholly satisfactory explanation. Most mysterious element of all was the fact that the lions could easily have lived on an abundant and varied diet of antelopes, but they preferred to enter houses and huts and attack human beings. "I was thoroughly puzzled by the Northern Rhodesia situation", reported Captain Pitman.

Tanganyika is Northern Rhodesia's only rival, I think, in the ghastly

statistics of man-eating lions. As recently as 1946-47, twenty man-eaters round Ubena in Tanyakanyika killed at least five hundred people before they were destroyed. These lions appeared to be working in relays. They would creep into a village; one would seize a child in its mouth and run away; and when this first lion became tired of carrying its prey it would drop the body for another lion to pick up. These tactics were repeated at several villages on the same night.

In spite of such appalling episodes, the days are over when a white hunter could make a living by killing lions. As I have said, I met Yank Allen during the first of my journeys up the Great North Road; and Yank was the last of the old professional lion hunters.

I was in the "Bulawayo Chronicle" office in 1922, delivering my story and pictures of a strange pioneer motor-car journey from the Cape which had been accomplished with the aid of a new motor-fuel made from prickly pears. Someone introduced me to a Mr. George Allen. I think they wanted to get rid of him, for although it was early, Mr. Allen had already taken a few drinks. The loud accents of Texas rang through an office where the members of the small editorial staff of those days were trying to get on with their work.

Well, I have always been willing to listen to the Yank Allens of this road. I went to the bar of his choice, and made a beer last a long time, and heard the facts about lion hunting.

Yank, I must tell you, was a large, slow-talking, lonely man in the middle

fifties. He went in for serious drinking only when he came to town on a spree. He was a rough customer, all right, outspoken but kindly.

I asked him where he learnt to shoot, and he said it came naturally to him and that he could hit anything long before he left home. Born in Texas, he had been a cattle-hand. He worked in the Argentine, and arrived in Cape Town with a shipload of cattle as the South African War was ending. After a spell in Johannesburg he had crossed the Limpopo with pack-donkeys and gone on to Broken Hill and the Belgian Congo.

Yank killed his first lion in Northern Rhodesia, a man-eater which had been raiding a village. He often spoke of lions as "dawgs", and never used the word "roaring"; Yank's "dawgs" were always "bawling" in the night. He

treated lions with contempt. At first he earned his living mainly as an elephant hunter. Lion skins were fetching seven pounds each in those days, however, so he shot lions as well.

It was not until 1912 that Yank Allen became a full-time lion hunter. Liebig's called him in to protect the twenty thousand head of cattle on their ranch, and so he found himself back on the Limpopo where the Great North Road enters Rhodesia. They paid him ten pounds for every lion he shot, and provided natives and transport free.

From one end of the ranch or the other a section manager would send the news that cattle had been killed. Yank would hurry to the spot with his mule-drawn, four-wheeler trap. He shot a great many lions himself, and finished off others with trap-guns.

Liebig's also paid him to destroy wild dogs. He put down poison and cut off their tails so that he could claim the reward.

Yank was a lone hunter. He did not trust natives on the trail. "Cowards", he said. "They tremble all over at the sight of a lion, and when they see a live one they're up the nearest tree like a pack of baboons".

Some say the ordinary .303 service rifle is not good enough for lions, but that was Yank Allen's favourite weapon. "Your gun is your friend", he was fond of saying. "Stand your ground, keep your thumb on the bolt so that you know the gun will go off, keep your finger on the trigger, and watch carefully".

Once a lion hid behind an anthill, sprang, and landed within six feet of

Yank before he could make use of the exclamation he reserved for such emergencies: “Good-bye, mother”. However, Yank had his finger on the trigger and he shot that lion in the head.

Yank told me that his most dangerous encounter was with a leopard. It tore the clothes off him, and he could not reach his rifle. Yank killed the leopard with his knife, and treated the lacerations with permanganate of potash. His worst accident was caused by the septic claw of a lion he was skinning. The claw scratched his wrist and he nearly lost his arm. That was towards the end of his career. “I never felt the same after that illness”, he declared.

Liebig’s could not hold a wanderer like Yank Allen for long. He was a gold prospector, he shot crocodiles for the British South Africa Company at

the low rate of one pound a crocodile, and he killed fifty-five full-grown lions on the Nuanetsi ranch, owned by the company. Once he made a little money by sending biltong to the Johannesburg market. After a run of luck he would head for Johannesburg or Bulawayo for what he called a “lively time”. That was no exaggeration.

When I left Yank, the bar was filling up for the lunch-time session. As I went out, Yank’s voice ran down the long counter: “What’s yer pison, fellers? If yer don’t want to drink with me mebbe you’ll fight with me”. That was the usual formula, and wise men preferred to drink with Yank Allen.

Yank died at Gwelo a couple of years after our meeting. It was tuberculosis that got him, as I said before, not a lion. I suppose that Yank’s total bag of

lions, probably more than three hundred, has been beaten since his death by hunters in East Africa. Wonderful tales of lion hunting have come from the Masai country. Another sort of lion record was set up in 1930 by my old friend, the late Donald Bain, hunter and desert guide.

A pride of lions killed a buffalo one night on the fringe of the Mababe Flats in Bechuanaland. Bain went out at sunrise to investigate, and found fifteen lions round the carcass. His first shot killed two lions – a very rare piece of luck indeed – and the rest bolted. Three more fell before the lions were out of range. Bain had shot five lions within six seconds.

Seven years later another friend of mine, Ernst Luchtenstein of Keetmanshoop, South West Africa, broke Bain's record and sent me a

photograph. His servants had reported that lions were attacking the sheep on the farm. Luchtenstein found the lions, emptied his magazine into them and propped up six dead lions for the picture.

Then a motor-mechanic named Tom Hughes, driving along the lonely track between Maun and the Victoria Falls, saw eight lions close to the road ahead. Stopping the car, he slid out with his rifle and dropped three of them immediately. His fourth shot wounded a lioness with cubs; and true to type the lioness charged him. At twenty yards the lioness halted for the final spring, tail swishing angrily. Hughes put a bullet between the eyes. He did not fail again; the next three shots brought down three lions. When Hughes reached Maun that night he had six lions, weighing 2,500 lbs., in

the back of his car. There was no room for the seventh. But he had broken the African record, and I think his seven lions within about thirty seconds will remain unsurpassed for a long time.

Now for sizes. To the north of Livingstone there is a railway station called Kalomo; and on the farm Lionkop in that district Mr. George Horton shot a lion which the taxidermist claimed as a world record. This was soon after World War II. The dressed skin measured twelve feet three inches from tip of nose to tip of tail; more than a foot longer than the previous record lion appearing in the sacred pages of Rowland Ward's "Records of Big Game". Stretching may occur after skinning, of course, but there is no doubt that Mr. Horton's lion was a monster.

After studying many reliable measurements, Pitman the game warden gave his verdict in favour of the lions of Northern Rhodesia. He found they were generally of large dimensions, and possibly the average size was larger than lions from other parts of Africa. Many of the Northern Rhodesia specimens weighed five hundred pounds; and that was a normal weight, not after gorging.

Lions sound dangerous along the Great North Road and sometimes they are dangerous. But a doctor who practised in the bush of Northern Rhodesia put the matter in perspective when he declared that wildest Africa is safer than the cities with their motor-cars and bars. He thought leopards caused more casualties than lions in his district; snakes and bees were a menace; and the cheap "gas-pipe"

guns used by many Africans were the greatest danger of all, as they often exploded.

How do you escape from a lion? One resourceful African was being carried off when he bit the lion's nose. The lion dropped him and he escaped. I have also heard of a native who pulled a lion's tongue out, causing such pain that the lion was glad to depart. But I am told that if you have not yet been attacked, the most successful method is to drop your hat and climb a tree. The lion goes for the hat first, giving you time to get out of his reach. Or so we hope.

The behaviour of a lion when face to face with human beings can never be predicted safely. One thing, however, is certain; if there is no tree you must stand your ground, resist the temptation to run; for a lion seeing a man in

flight may behave like a dog and give chase. I know one man in Northern Rhodesia who, finding his courage failing, decided to saunter casually away. The lion followed at the same slow pace. My friend, inspired by the emergency, drew a box of matches from his pocket and set fire to the dry grass. Lions dread fire, and he escaped.

Nevertheless, a hungry man-eater, a lion with worn teeth, too old to kill much game, will disobey all rules and terrorise a district. Then even the white settlers bar their windows, and thorn bomas are built round every native hut. It was a man-eater that conquered its fear of brilliant light and jumped through the window of a house in Northern Rhodesia where a farmer lay reading in bed with a paraffin lamp beside him. The lamp



fell over in the turmoil and went out; but the man, with remarkable presence of mind, flung his bedclothes over the lion. He escaped into another room and slammed the door before the lion emerged from the blankets.

In spite of Yank Allen's opinion, African natives have displayed great courage in the presence of lions. A native woman in Northern Rhodesia saw her baby seized by a lion. She dashed at the animal, tore at its whiskers, recovered the baby, and produced the mangy hairs as proof of the encounter! I met a Bushman, fearfully scarred, in the Kalahari desert: He had been pinned down by a lion, and escaped by throwing sand into the lion's eyes. A Muhimba woman in East Africa, hearing a noise in the cattle kraal at night, found a lion among the goats; with a spear she

killed the invader. Native children have been known to throw stones at lions – an amusement I have never felt tempted to imitate.

In the Zambesi valley many natives still live in huts built on poles. The platforms are high, for a hungry lion will jump like a cat after meat. Selous records the loss of a native pulled off a platform twenty feet in height. Natives in the Zambesi valley do not climb down at night. Once a native in that area was riding a bicycle in a bush pathway. The tribesman found his hat, boots and the bicycle next day – nothing more. And the cyclist was the third human victim within three weeks. A man-eater in the Fort Jameson district of Northern Rhodesia stalked a native father, mother and young daughter. The parents were killed, but the child was not attacked.

Soon afterwards the same lion (recognised by the marks of broken claw on one of the fore-paws) took a white man from beneath the mosquito-net in a rest-hut. Victim after victim was reported, until at last the governor of the colony offered a free elephant licence as a prize to any hunter who killed the lion. This was a reward worth having; a licence then cost forty pounds, and it entitled the hunter to shoot three elephants. The tusks might be worth from £100 to £150. Many expeditions were organised, but in the end the lion was poisoned by the servants of a planter, who received the licence.

Everyone in South Africa has heard the story of the struggle between a ranger named Harry Wolhuter and a lion in the Kruger National Park. One lion attacked the horse Wolhuter was

riding. Wolhuter was unseated, and fell right into the jaws of a second lion. He was picked up by the right shoulder and dragged away over rough ground for nearly a hundred yards. Then Wolhuter remembered his sheath knife. He could only use his left hand, so decided to wait for a better chance and pretended to be dead. Presently the lion stopped to rest and released Wolhuter's shoulder. The next moment Wolhuter stabbed the lion desperately, twice in the side, once in the throat. He stood up, shouting at the lion, and saw it retreat. With the last of his failing strength he climbed a tree and tied himself to a branch with his handkerchief. There his native servants found him, and a dead lion not far away.

One man, as far as I know, and one only, throttled a lioness with his bare

hands. He was Major H. C. Stigand, and the incident occurred near Simba station on the same line, between Mombasa and Nairobi, where the Tsavo man-eaters created such havoc. Stigand followed a wounded lioness into cover. He was seriously mauled and lost his rifle. In this predicament he gathered the last of his strength and strangled the lioness.

A lion skin is the trophy that every hunter wants, and among the secret ambitions of many men in Africa is the desire to shoot a lion. It always seemed to me a simple affair, provided one could find the time and travel into lion country. Sitting at home, the danger of lion shooting hardly enters one's thoughts.

But when you are out in the bush, towards sundown, with a loaded rifle in your hands and no companions in

sight, a queer, lone feeling assails the novice. It is then that you realise that lion hunting may develop into a duel between man and beast. Of course you can let the lion go, and the chances are a hundred to one against an unprovoked attack. If you fire and wound that lion, you are in deadly peril until you have stopped the rush.

Could I be sure of hitting a maddened lion as it came bounding towards me with tail swinging like an angry cat? I often wondered. The thought occurred to me, too, whether I should have the nerve to fire at all.

As I drove across the Kalahari one evening with an expedition we came into a clearing and saw seven lions against the background of bush. I wrenched my rifle out of the piled equipment at the back of the car and shot at that magnificent pride. Others

fired. Everyone missed, and the lions bolted like frightened rabbits. It would have been different if we had encountered the lions of Northern Rhodesia. Only a Yank Allen could have saved us.

## CHAPTER 6

### PORT MPULUNGU

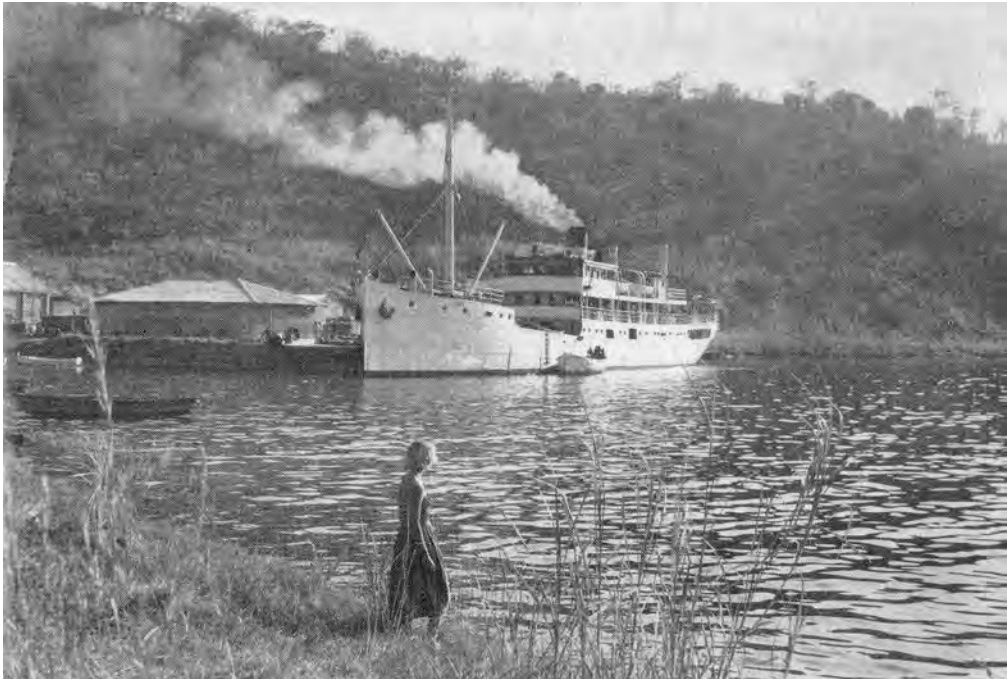
NORTHERN RHODESIA has one port. If you do not happen to know about this queer spot, you might look at my picture showing the S.S. *Liemba* along side the wharf at Mpulungu and imagine it was a seaport.

In fact, Mpulungu is six hundred miles from the nearest ocean, and also six hundred miles from Broken Hill by the motor-coach that runs up the Great North Road every three weeks to link up with the steamer. That is the "Boat Express" of the bush.

I drove the twenty-five miles down to Mpulungu from Abercorn; down two thousand five hundred feet in that short distance; down from a fine climate to something which made me curse. They have "rest huts" at this

port at the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, and some people spend short holidays there. The shorter the better, I say. When the *Liemba* comes in from Kigoma, nearly every white person in the Abercorn district meets her at Mpulungu. It is a social occasion, and it has gone on for so many years that it has become a tradition. Lunch, or sun downers and dinner on board the *Liemba*, according to the length of her stay.

If you need a change of diet and scene desperately, this may suit you. The *Liemba* came in late when I was at Mpulungu, but the eager visitors went on board and drank the East African lager, and went into the third sitting for lunch of curry and rice at four in the burning afternoon. I am not sneering, for the pathos of such escapes is not lost on me. Obviously I



Northern Rhodesia has one port. If you do not happen to know about this queer spot you might look at my picture of the S.S. Liemba alongside the wharf at Mpulungu and imagine it was a seaport.

could never live in a small tropical outpost:

Mpulungu is sheltered by a large island called Kambula. There is also a Pig Island, inhabited by buffalo (which swam there), bush pig and monkeys which may have been taken there in canoes. Each local chief must prove his strength by swimming the two hundred yards from the shore to Pig Island before he is accepted by the tribe.

Swimming is a necessity if you are to survive at Mpulungu. I was assured that there were no crocodiles near the harbour. When I came out I learned that another danger had not been revealed to me. Near the wharf I saw snakes, the Tanganyika water cobras, most venomous of the species.

Arab slave dhows sailed down to Mpulungu about a century ago. The first white people to use the natural harbour were members of the London Missionary Society, and their faithful henchmen of the African Lakes Corporation, who assembled and launched their steamer *Good News* near there seventy-five years ago. The ship had arrived in numbered parts; first of all by ocean from England to the Zambesi; then up the rivers, and over the two thousand foot escarpment out of Nyasaland; four men carrying the bronze screw; eight men the rudder frame.

The *Good News* was the pioneer steamer to navigate any East African lake. She lasted a long time. (The Germans shelled the old packet in 1915 to make sure she would not be used against them.) Lake steamers



Mpulungu today consists of a neat, fenced harbour area with cargo sheds, a police station, post office, three stores and the rest huts.



have to last a long time, even though the parts now travel by rail instead of on men's backs.

Yes, it was heavy work in the old days, and the *Good News* was a large craft to find her way to the heart of Africa so long ago. Fifty-four feet overall, she was rigged as a ketch and sailed well when her master, Captain Edward Hore, shut off the engine.

I saw the bones of the *Good News* near Mpulungu, a tree growing out of her, holes in her rusty hull where the Germans had peppered her. The natives had taken the upper works and beaten the old iron into hammers and axe-heads.

The missionaries built a church after the shipwrights had put the *Good News* together, and you can visit the ruins of Niamkolo Church on the high

ground above Mpulungu. They used it until about half a century ago, when everyone had to clear out because of sleeping sickness. Death was almost certain within ten miles of the lake shore.

Another abandoned mission close to Mpulungu is Kambole, which had an orchard and a herd of cattle. Now the thatched roof has fallen in, and only a few pillars and the gables remain. Once there was a small monument telling the story of Kambole, but an elephant crushed it and flung the remnants into the bush.

Between the wars an aircraft, taking part in a race from London to the Cape, crashed in the Mpulungu bush. The wreckage drew visitors for some time, and the pilot's seat is still used as a throne by a local chief on ceremonial occasions.

You might not expect to hear of a shipwreck in these waters, but accidents will happen. Years ago the Belgians heard vague reports of a new harbour at Mpulungu and sent a steamer to investigate. She ran into Msende Bay by mistake, a dangerous inlet close by, and struck a rock. Fortunately it is easy to carry out salvage work on a lake.

Mpulungu lives mainly on fish. It is almost worth enduring the heat of Mpulungu to watch the line of scores of canoes luring the fish into their nets at night with torches.

Steamers had to lie off Mpulungu for some years after World War I, and dug-out canoes worked the cargoes. A government engineer, Col. J. H. Venning, was then asked to plan a wharf and give an estimate. He knew there would be a long delay if his

figures ran into thousands, and he knew the wharf was needed urgently. So he secured the concrete and the convict labour and built the wharf without any fuss at all. A champagne lunch was held to celebrate this achievement, and the engineer announced that he had done the whole job for less than two hundred pounds. Other more advanced countries might well envy the resource shown by Northern Rhodesia's harbour engineer. Col. Venning also built the road from Abercorn to Mpulungu (for £50) and drove the first car to the lake.

Mpulungu today consists of a neat, fenced harbour area with cargo sheds, a police station, post office, three stores, and the rest huts I have mentioned. No great port, admittedly, and certainly not my favourite African harbour. But you must see the place at

its best. The *Liemba* is due, the white and black population is down on the waterfront, and Mpulungu pulsates under the sun.

The district commissioner (who acts as port captain) is here, and his African assistants have pitched tents. African traders have brought tins of cassava which they will sell to the African passengers in the *Liemba*, and they will buy coconuts and stalks of green bananas.

Now the long-awaited *Liemba* is coming in slowly with a clash and jingle of engine-room signals. White officers in white duck are on the bridge, with African deckhands in seafaring blue about the decks; white passengers leaning over the promenade rail; excited crowds of African passengers fore and aft. With white hull and yellow funnel, you might take

the *Liemba* for a mail boat. She is the most important British ship on the lake, an eight-hundred tonner with a story. But there are more luxurious little liners to the north of Mpulungu, flying the Belgian flag. I do not suppose the *Liemba* would be here at all but for one of Winston Churchill's romantic whims.

Designed originally for the Baltic trade, the *Liemba* was built in Germany at a cost of twenty thousand pounds. The East African Railway Company of Berlin bought her in 1913, dismantled her, and shipped the parts to Dar-es-Salaam. The railway had reached Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika by that time; so the *Liemba* arrived, section by section, with all the necessary stocks and slips and scaffolding, masts, boilers, machinery, and twenty German ship-builders.

All though the dramatic year of 1914 they laboured, and in May 1915 she was ready for launching. Her name then was *Gotzen*, after the explorer Count Gotzen who set out to cross Africa towards the end of last century with six hundred porters and two Indian elephants. (They arrived at the Congo mouth without the elephants.) Korvetten Kapitan Zimmer took charge of the *Liemba*, a naval man far from the ocean, and she ran her trials successfully, working up to seven knots.

Her first passengers were troops bound for Bismarckburg (now Kasanga) near Mpulungu. And her first voyage was nearly her last. With seven hundred soldiers crowded in her 'tween decks, the *Gotzen* plunged into a southerly gale. At times she could not move forward. Her steering gear failed, and

then she rolled so heavily that everyone thought she would capsize. Kapitan Zimmer must have wished that he had never left the sea for this damned freshwater lake. Once the ship was nearly driven ashore by the fierce south wind. They blamed the wood-fired boilers for their troubles, and returned thankfully to Kigoma at last.

Although she was armed, the *Gotzen* did not take part in any of the famous naval actions on Lake Tanganyika. Belgian air pilots attacked her as she lay off Kigoma, but failed to score a hit with their primitive bombs. Before the Germans evacuated Kigoma they scuttled the *Gotzen* outside the harbour. Only her masts and funnel-top remained above the surface.

There she rested until after the war. Belgian salvage men succeeded in dragging her into Kigoma harbour, but

she was still partly submerged. Then the British took over Kigoma, and Winston Churchill (at the Admiralty) showed a personal interest in the *Gotzen*. He sent out salvage experts under Lt.-Cmdr. T. Kerr, R.N., and they raised the ship. It was then discovered that the Germans had planned a salvage operation, for the engines had been well greased, and had not suffered during eight years on the bottom. However, the salvage work cost twenty thousand pounds (the original price of the ship) while reconditioning cost another thirty thousand pounds. An expensive whim indeed, for a new and better ship could have been ordered at lower cost.

Not until 1927 was the ship ready to sail again under her new name *Liamba* – the old native name of the lake. The governor came up from Dar-es-Salaam

for the trial run, and the band of the Kings African Rifles played during a lunch of eight courses. It was a promising start, but I understand that the *Liamba* has never paid her way.

She transported thousands of soldiers and many Greek and Polish refugees during World War II. Her top-hammer has grown since then, but down below the original 1913 pattern German engines are still thumping away at about eight knots and an onion.

Take a glance at the old ship's cruising ground. Lake Tanganyika is a blue lizard of a lake on the map, four hundred and fifty miles long, but so narrow that canoes paddle across and seldom is the mariner out of sight of land on the far side. However, this lizard has an evil reputation. Violent storms arise without warning. In the dry season the wind may change

direction eight times in one day. Gaps in the high, fringing mountain ranges act as funnels, so that the storms of the highlands sweep down on the waters with great force.

Tanganyika was tranquil when I steamed northwards from Mpulungu to Kigoma. On board the *Liemba*, however, they told me of the gale in January 1954 when the chief engineer was injured, the lighters towing astern were lost, and an African deck hand was drowned. Enormous breakers crashed on shore, destroying trees and huts.

Fortunately it is not always like that. Someone at Mpulungu declared that he was far out on the lake in a motor cruiser one day when he encountered a large canoe. It was manned by three blind men paddling hard, while a keen-eyed piccanin steered for them.

They were going shopping at Mpulungu.

Tanganyika is tideless. It is the longest freshwater lake in the world; and with soundings approaching five thousand feet is probably also the deepest. Islands are rare in this lake owing to the fact that it was formed by a dramatic geological rift, a great fissure in the earth's crust. Day after day you sail between mountains dropping sheer for thousands of feet into the water. Some people feel trapped, as though they were in a deep crack surrounded by a menacing Africa.

White explorers were mystified by this narrow lake, for there were reports of sensational changes in level. Richard Burton, who discovered it about a century ago, thought it had no outlet. The water is brackish, as it was for centuries a closed inland sea.

Scientists have worked out various theories to explain the rise and fall in the waters of this remote phenomenon, with its peculiarities of discharge. One scientist more cautious than the rest has pointed out: "Speculations on the history of Tanganyika rest on few facts and many hypotheses".

It seems from early Arab reports, and the records of Burton, Speke, Livingstone and Stanley, that Lake Tanganyika rose gradually from 1840 until 1878. Stanley discovered a blocked outlet on the western shore, the Lukuga River, where Albertville now stands. He realised that the barrier ten miles from the lake would not hold the rising of the waters much longer, and predicted a great debacle. Two years later, in 1878, the rainy season combined with wind and wave to break the barrage. For a decade the

great lake emptied itself. Villages that stood at the water's edge were left some way inland. Then, when the level had fallen by thirty feet, a relative stability was reached. However, the tideless lake is still subject to fluctuations, and something of the old mystery remains.

Zoologists have also found in Lake Tanganyika riddles they cannot answer. Speke, who accompanied Burton, really started the controversy when he took back to Britain a collection of lake shells which resembled sea shells. The other great lakes of Africa did not hold such shells. German scientists spoke of Tanganyika as a "Reliktensee", a relic of a former connection with the salt oceans. Before this, the geologists had regarded the interior of Africa as a part

of the world which had not been submerged.

One expedition after another brought back marine specimens from Tanganyika – crabs, prawns, sponges, molluscs, all suggesting a marine origin, yet unlike modern sea creatures. Strangest of all, perhaps, were the jelly-fish which the natives called “Liemba”, and which gave the name to the lake. An old native with a streak of poetry informed a British zoologist: “All the lakes you have seen are different from Liemba. They are blind lakes, asleep. In the rain Liemba sleeps, but when the clouds dissolve and the night wind dies down before daylight, Tanganyika awakes to look at the moon and the stars, and the lake is then full of eyes.”

Those eyes were the millions of jelly-fish, each about the size of a florin,

with tentacles like their ocean relatives. Other great lakes have no such creatures.

So it appears that Tanganyika was stocked with primitive forms from the ocean very long ago, probably in the Jurassic. Through the ages its waters freshened, so that most of the ancient marine fauna died and modern African freshwater creatures reached the lake and flourished. Yet some of the old organisms survived, the sponges and the jellyfish.

You hear many stories of monsters in Lake Tanganyika, and some of these stories are true. I am not prepared to accept the native legend of the great fish that devoured a whole canoe with twenty paddlers. I know that as far back as the German days the government offered a reward for the capture of a “freshwater shark” which had



been reported, and that the rupees went unclaimed. Yet there are monsters in Lake Tanganyika.

After all, what can you call a Nile perch but a monster? Tall as a man, it may weigh as much as two hundred pounds in this lake. Some have pink eyes, some yellow, and they have been known to attack canoes and seize the paddles in their fearsome teeth.

If you had called at Kasanga about seven years after World War I you would have found a Colonel Charles Gray living there on board a small craft with a cabin. He studied the lake fish, and reported several attacks on canoes by Nile perch. The great fish showed no fear as they tackled the paddles. A paddler who had fallen into the water might have been seriously injured. Paddlers have had to defend themselves with spears on these

occasions. They were sure the attackers were fish and not crocodiles. It is possible, however, that the tiger fish may also run wild in this way.

Fishing is excellent in Lake Tanganyika, though I hauled out nothing myself. The so-called lake salmon, a bright silver in colour, is edible but not recommended for those unable to dissect bones. Yellow belly, running up to six pounds, are better eating. My favourite lake fish is the little *dagaa*, like whitebait, which feed on the surface and are caught in scoop nets.

All Central Africa knows this tasty fish in its sun-dried form. Mpulungu reeks of *dagaa*, for hundreds of tons of it are landed there from dug-out canoes every year. I heard all about *dagaa* from a South African trader who had come to Mpulungu to meet four Arab fish merchants with a

consignment of *dagaa* picked up by the *Liemba* at various lake ports. I learned how careful it is necessary to be when you are carrying two thousand pounds in notes so that you can pay cash for your *dagaa*; and how essential it is to see that the sacks contain pure *dagaa* and not make-weight substitutes. A transaction with Arab fish merchants, it seems, is not quite like dealing with the Bank of England.

For hours I waited in a thatched hut with open sides, praying for the *Liemba* to arrive and carry me away from the heat of Mpulungu. If ever I smell *dagaa* again I shall see the tired face of the trader, and the chattering natives, and the sun-baked hill looming over the wharf at Mpulungu.

When the *Liemba* pulled out of Mpulungu to my relief at last, I found myself sitting in the dining-saloon opposite a bulky, blue-eyed man with a South African accent. He turned out to be Mr Stuart Findlay-Bisset, born in Aberdeen and brought up on the historic Magersfontein farm outside Kimberley. In the Rhodesia's this outspoken and genial character is known as Zambesi Jim.<sup>2</sup>

Zambesi went without soup that day, and started his lunch with fried lake fish. Next came an oxtail stew, and then a vast helping of curry and rice with piri-piri and five other sauces and relishes. I watched enthralled while Zambesi cooled his throat with three Tusker beers, followed by three gins

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<sup>2</sup> When I last heard of Mr Findlay-Bisset (in February, 1961) he was in Johannesburg recruiting jet-pilots for the Katanga army.

with ginger beer. The steward waited at the hatch for Zambezi's signals, and drink followed drink without delay. I imagine those two had travelled together before. Zambesi rounded it off with a huge cup of coffee, and then he was ready to talk.

"I've bought all the champagne in the ship, so if you want any you can drink with me", he announced.

Before I left the table I had heard the life story of Zambesi Jim. I drank some of his champagne gratefully during the voyage, and I also absorbed a great deal of strange African experience ranging from elephant hunting to black magic.

"Three hundred elephants I've shot, and every one of them up the backside", Zambesi claimed. "Why up the backside?" "Because they're going the

other way, see, when you shoot 'em like that. If you miss – well, they keep on going away from you." He rolled with laughter as he recalled this cunning trick. Zambesi Jim was in his late fifties when I met him, and he had given up elephant hunting. He told me that his father gave him twenty-five pounds when he was sixteen, and sent him out into the world.

"I fixed on Rhodesia, travelling free in the guard's van, pumping the stove and making tea for the guard", narrated Zambesi. "I never knew a man could drink so much tea. Boy! Another beer".

When the train reached the Rhodesian border town of Plumtree, the immigration officials asked Zambesi to produce one hundred pounds. He asked for time to go to his luggage, walked across the road, borrowed the

money from a Jewish storekeeper, satisfied the officials, returned the money and entered Rhodesia.

“Wonderful people, the Jews”, remarked Zambesi. “I owe everything to them. They looked after me on the Zambesi River in my early days. Did you know they have special shawls for praying? Just imagine that!”

Zambesi Jim went up the river to Barotseland on behalf of a Jewish trading firm. Livingstone to Mongu, four hundred and fifty miles, was a three months’ journey in those days, at the end of World War I. He had a five-ton barge, loaded with cloth that looked like a butcher’s apron. On some days the paddlers covered five miles, on others twenty. There were only about a dozen white people at Mongu, and they were always changing because the death-roll was so high.

“One of the most popular lines I sold in Barotseland was a sea-shell from somewhere near Port Elizabeth”, declared Zambesi. “Natives kept medicine in those shells. They had a marvellous cure for sore eyes – a dried worm, powdered. It cured me.”

Zambesi accepted skins for his trade goods. Blue monkey skins from the thick rain forest. “They’re beautiful, with long fur”, he said. “Once I bought thirty skins myself at twelve shillings each and had them made up as a coat in London. Someone offered me three hundred guineas for the finished coat, but I gave it to a lady friend.”

He dealt in other skins, too, and karosses made from the great cats, and black civet cat pelts, and he paid sixpence each for leguan skins. Pythons cost more. One python skin measured twenty-three feet. “Probably

been stretched a bit”, remarked Zambesi.

After the trading job which gained him his nickname, Zambesi Jim went elephant hunting in the Loangwa Valley. Sometimes he did a little poaching, and sold the ivory over the border in Portuguese territory. Then he moved to Mpulungu and set up as a trader along the shores of Lake Tanganyika.

“Yes, I shot elephants where the Kariba dam stands”, went on Zambesi. “I’ve made and lost fortunes. And I’ve seen some queer things.”

Zambesi told me about old man Telaka, priest of the Nondo people not far from Mpulungu. Telaka claimed to be one hundred and seven years old; he used to be chief, but the government deposed him when he became

decrepit. Fishermen used to pay tribute to Telaka at the start of each fishing season, so that their luck would be good. “He got a lot of my spare silver – I had to leave it on a rock in the lake, just to please everybody”, Zambesi declared. When he was deposed the fishermen stopped their payments.

“Every year the Nondo area had produced about five hundred tons of fish”, said Zambesi. “It dropped to fifty tons. They’ve never had a good season since they stopped paying the old man. Now how do you explain that?”

“Coincidence”, I said.

“All right – here’s another coincidence for you. A white crocodile hunter went to the Lufu River near Mpulungu with four natives he had brought with him from the north and some local natives.

They went hunting in two boats. As they were passing a certain hill the local men said: ‘That is where our water god lives – you must not point at that hill’.”

The four natives from the north laughed at this superstition and showed their contempt by pointing at the sacred hill. “You people are just baboons – you are still wild”, they jeered.

That night the boat with the four scoffers was upset by a hippo and the guns were lost. They went back and fetched more guns. Soon afterwards the boat caught fire and the four men perished.

Zambesi Jim took me back to the old Africa. He had fired every sort of weapon from a flintlock bell-mouthed blunderbuss to a modern elephant gun.

He knew every tribe in Northern Rhodesia – and every drink. I can still hear him discussing the different types of alcohol, from “black velvet” to an African brew that the government banned.

“I don’t really know the secret of it, but you start with coconut milk”, explained Zambesi. “Of course, various things are added. It’s milk the first day, beer the second, whisky the third and dynamite the fourth. There’s a fifty pound fine nowadays if they catch them at it.”

Cheered by these reminiscences and Zambesi Jim’s champagne, I watched the Tanganyika shoreline moving past, and entered lake ports that were new to me along the eastern shore.

## CHAPTER 7

### *LIEMBA SAILS THE LAKE*

KASANGA, which the Germans called Bismarckburg, is only a short run from Mpulungu. The *Liemba* anchored beside a promontory where stands the ruined fort which the Germans built early this century to command the coastline near their frontier with British territory.

It is one of those Teutonic castles which I have seen in other parts of Africa, in Togoland and the sands of South West Africa; a “Beau Geste” outpost of the type which always reminds me of wildly improbable episodes which really happened in such places. Here at Bismarckburg the Germans carried a loopholed wall right across the promontory, which has steep sides. They planned the fort

well, and the time came when they needed it.

For years it was an easy post, commanded by a subaltern. There was a little Customs work, native cases to be tried, shooting on the rifle range, tennis in the afternoon. Before the railway was built a journey from the lake to the coast took a couple of months.

People from Abercorn used to talk about “visiting Germany” when they called at Bismarckburg before World War I. It was impossible to mistake the nationality of the rulers. From the centre of the parade ground rose a black, white and red flagstaff carrying the Imperial Eagle. Sentry boxes with zebra stripes stood on each side of the massive arched gateway to the fort.

In the mess the Germans served cold Munchener lager, German sausage and other welcome imported *delicatessen*. The mess was decorated with “heads” of rhino and giraffe and antelope. Besides the commandant there was a medical officer (a Russian at one period), and a civilian paymaster. Among the garrison troops were a number of Sudanese, wearing neck-flaps and boots, two luxuries which African troops do not usually require.

This corner of the lake is the Lufipa country, and some of the people show by their light skins and sensitive noses that they are of Hamitic stock. Long ago a prophet in southern Tanganyika declared that a woman with two daughters and a retinue of servants would arrive in this part and settle near the lake. She was always referred to as the “white woman”. And lo! two

centuries ago there appeared a light-skinned woman named Unda, who fulfilled the prophecy. The chief gave up his throne at once, and Unda ruled the Wafipa.

This was a quiet corner of the lake (apart from Arab slave raids) until World War I. British troops under Colonel Murray attacked Bismarckburg in 1916, and the colonel sent a party under the white flag to demand the surrender of the fort.

By this time the Germans had dug trenches across the promontory, and strengthened their defences with rows of pointed stakes. Colonel Murray saw that a frontal attack would be hopeless. But he told Lieut. Hasslacher, the German commandant: “I will blow you into the lake when my guns arrive”.





This corner of the lake is the Lufipa country, and some of the people show by their light skins and sensitive noses that they are of Hamitic stock.

Hasslacher refused to surrender. Some sort of misunderstanding occurred after the white flag parley, however, and a British medical officer named Harold with several others sauntered up to the gate of the fort under the impression that the Germans had surrendered.

“What can I do for you?” inquired Hasslacher. “Oh, just coming in”, replied Dr. Harold.

Someone on the German side then opened fire. A British officer was wounded. (He died later.) A British soldier grabbed Hasslacher and dragged him away from the fort. This gave the British party a chance of escape, as the Germans were afraid of firing again in case they hit their own commandant. They took shelter in the trenches, while the British opened fire

on the fort with machine-guns, and the Germans replied.

“We seem to have reached an impasse”, pointed out Hasslacher. “I am your prisoner, but you can’t get away. Call it stalemate?”

Dr. Harold agreed, and the white flag was raised again. The Germans brought out lemonade from the fort, and Dr. Harold attended to the wounded. But the opposing troops remained in position.

Then a little British fleet made a dramatic entry into the bay. H.M. Ships *Mimi* and *Toutou* (the armed motor-boats from Cape Town) arrived with a small tug known as H.M.S. *Fifi*. That night the Germans abandoned their fort. They had a fleet of their own hidden on the far side of the promontory, dhows and large canoes. These

small craft were invisible from the mainland, and the Germans manned them in silence and escaped.

These unrecorded sideshows in the remote backwaters of world wars are sometimes more dramatic than the great, impersonal battles. I may add that the Germans who escaped from Bismarckburg crept up the east coast to Ujiji. There the Belgians were ready for them, and the German force was almost wiped out.

I suppose there was no more fantastic naval operation in World War I than the secret expedition which was sent from England to wipe out the German forces on Lake Tanganyika. One of the tiny ships which took part ended her career on Table Bay, and for a long time my own small yacht was moored alongside her at the Clock Tower. I

took a note of the wording on the brass plate under her tiller.

*Toutou*

This launch served in the East African campaign and sank three German gunboats with assistance of sister launch

*Mimi.*

*Toutou* and *Mimi* were forty-foot motor boats, with powerful twin engines, three-pounder guns in their bows and machine-guns mounted aft. Commander C. B. Spicer Simson, R.N. was in command. I believe the idea originated in the mind of a Mr. J. R. Lee, who knew Lake Tanganyika and realised early in the war that something would have to be done about the German mastery of those waters. He went to London and made his point.

Lee returned with the expedition as an R.N.V.R. officer. The medical officer had tropical experience. Another volunteer in naval uniform was a B.S.A. Police officer who knew the country. The outfit, which became known as “Simson’s Circus”, reached Cape Town in the *Llanstephan Castle* in July 1915, and the launches and many tons of supplies were loaded on railway trucks. Railhead was at Fungurume, north of Elisabethville, two thousand miles away. A month passed before H.M. ships *Toutou* and *Mimi* could be offloaded and dragged through the bush on wagons hauled by traction engines and later by oxen.

They had to make their own roads and bridges, the twenty-eight officers and men of the expedition being aided from time to time by thousands of Belgian Congo natives.

Once the naval men reached a village from which everyone had fled, leaving only a young baby. They adopted the baby. The child went all the way to Lake Tanganyika with them as the expedition’s mascot.

Sometimes the forest was so dense that they could hardly see the sky. Once a ravine twenty feet deep had to be filled in with trees before they could cross. Belgian officials helped in every possible way, but they were laying odds of one hundred to one that the ships would never reach the lake. The rainy season was not far off, and then the hazardous route would become impassable. Bush fires, fever, sleeping sickness, heat, lack of water and lions all menaced them, but they struggled through to the Lualaba River and launched their ships.

After three hundred and fifty miles on the river, *Toutou* and *Mimi* were lifted out again and placed on the railway at Kabalo. The line had not yet reached Albertville on the lake, so there was another road-making episode. They celebrated their arrival at Lake Tanganyika with extra tots of navy rum. But the lake was a raging sea, and Commander Simson had to build a harbour before *Toutou* and *Mimi* could be launched. That was on Christmas Eve 1915, six months after leaving England.

Were the Germans aware of the British naval expedition? Von Lettow Vorbeck, in his reminiscences, declared that the approach of the Royal Navy “had long been under observation”. He claimed that his men had picked up documents suggesting that a surprise was being prepared for

the Germans on Lake Tanganyika. Von Lettow claimed that he suspected the presence of small torpedo craft. He realised the importance of the move, as operations on Lake Tanganyika might decide the course of the whole East African campaign.

Von Lettow’s information could not have been very precise, however, or his own navy might not have been defeated so easily. The first naval action occurred on Boxing Day, when the slow German gunboat *Kingani* appeared off Albertville. Commander Simson was almost taken by surprise. He was holding the usual naval early morning prayers. His ships had not yet run their trials.

However, the captain of the *Kingani* could have had no idea that the new breakwater was sheltering two dangerous British enemies. His ship, a

wooden steamer about sixty feet long, carried one gun of about the same calibre as those mounted in *Toutou* and *Mimi*. But his speed was only six knots, and he would never have ventured out alone against *Toutou* and *Mimi* if he had known they were at Albertville.

When the *Kingani* sighted her enemies she headed for Kigoma, forty miles away across the lake. She fired a few shots as she retreated, but the lake was choppy, the gunner inexperienced. One hit would have finished the unprotected British launches; but the shells went wide. *Toutou* and *Mimi*, which could do fifteen knots, soon overhauled the *Kingani*. They opened fire at two thousand yards, and within eleven minutes *Kingani* was on fire from end to end. The captain and nearly all on deck were killed. A

German engine-room artificer ran up the white flag, and then took the ship into shallow water, where she sank.

Thousands of natives watched the battle. They lay on the ground and trickled sand through their hair, an act of admiration, when Commander Simson came on shore. Drums sounded all night and victory bonfires were lit.

Commander Simson knew that he had two more formidable enemies to meet. One was the *Hedwig von Wissman*, a larger craft than the *Kingani* and armed with two guns. The other was the *Gotzen*, now the *Liemba*. Simson salvaged the *Kingani*, mounted a twelve-pounder gun, and re-named her H.M.S. *Fifi*. With this flotilla he felt that he could meet anything the Germans sent against him.

*Toutou* foundered in a gale and was not available during the next engagement. (She was raised soon afterwards.) Early in February 1916, *Fifi* and *Mimi* encountered the *Hedwig von Wissman* and polished her off in two minutes. Natives living along the Belgian coastline of Tanganyika were especially pleased, as the *Hedwig von Wissman* had been in the habit of cruising along that shore and opening fire whenever natives were seen.

As you know, the *Gotzen* was scuttled before the British naval forces were able to attack her. The scuttling remains something of a mystery. She was a new steel vessel, many times the size of her largest adversary, and mounting four ten centimetre guns and other weapons. After the war Commander Simson admitted that he did not know how to tackle her. He fitted

*Mimi* with improvised dropping gear for torpedoes, but doubted very much whether this device would have been successful.

Then the *Gotzen* disappeared. Simson combed the lake for her, little knowing that she had been scuttled. It seems that the Germans had lost their nerve. They had sent their ships out, and the ships had never returned. Apparently they had not discovered that the forces arrayed against them consisted of two small motor-boats and their own *Kingani* flying the White Ensign. They imagined some powerful enemy, and they solved Simson's problem by scuttling the real menace of the lake, the fierce and strong *Gotzen*. It was not shortage of expert naval material that caused this step, for they had the captain, officers, gunners and whole company of the cruiser *Konigsberg* to

draw upon. The German explanation was that they feared the *Gotzen* would be captured and used for transporting troops across the lake. I cannot understand the decision. It is clear that with a man like Commander Simson in command, the *Gotzen* would have played havoc with her adversaries.

Simson received a D.S.O. The *Toutou* came back to Cape Town, there to be sold and used for years carrying trippers round Table Bay. And the native baby who proved his value as a mascot was left in charge of the White Fathers at Albertville. Simson had not lost a man during his brief fights with the Germans on Lake Tanganyika. And the *Liemba* (ex-*Gotzen*) still sails the lake.

Someone once defined Lake Tanganyika as “a long stretch of water entire-

ly surrounded by White Fathers”. He was referring to missionaries who have been toiling along these shores ever since Pope Leo XIII entrusted the region to the newly founded order eighty years ago. They are African specialists, working only in Africa.

White Fathers wear white robes and black rosaries. I had seen them in Northern Rhodesia, and I came to know them better when a venerable priest joined the *Liemba* and travelled with us to Kigoma. He was bound for Tabora, there to elect a new bishop. (Zambesi Jim offered to fill the post, but was hastily ruled out of order.) Incidentally, one bishop of the order in Tanganyika is an African.

Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, founder of the White Fathers, was a far-sighted man. Towards the end of last century he warned the governments of Britain



and France that if their white people exploited the Africans they would one day be turned out of Africa.

The old missionary told me how the pioneers of the order were murdered in the Sahara. Others came to East Africa when they were unable to enter the desert. They marched upcountry from Bagamoyo, priests and lay brothers, carrying rifles and wearing the enormous cork helmets of those days. Only Livingstone had preached Christianity in this land before them. They had hundreds of porters, but they had left the wine and good food of France behind them and they suffered many hardships.

Some went down with malaria and were carried along on stretchers. One or two suffered temporary blindness as a result of bilharzia. Chiefs exacted toll for passing through their country.

Robbers carried off precious supplies. They encountered drought and floods, terror and death; they were skeletons, but the survivors reached Lake Tanganyika at last, and there they stayed. One of the leaders, a farm lad named Joseph Dupont, was called by the natives Bwana Moto-Moto, which may be translated as "Father Burning Fire". When the people needed meat he was a great hunter. He settled among a tribe which had migrated from Angola. According to their legend, these people had followed a white man across Africa, and they believed they would find another white man to lead them one day. Dupont was their man.

After the White Fathers, those bearded men of culture and education, came the White Sisters. Today there are more than two thousand of the men,

more than one thousand women. Landing on the lake shore day after day from the *Liemba*, I saw them and their missions. I passed the graveyards where the pioneers of the order were buried, the dedicated men and women who knew Dark Africa. I read the names and the dates over the graves, and went back thoughtfully to the ship. What would Africa have been without such people as these?

I have seen many missions in the deserts and tropics of Africa, and I have always admired the way in which Roman Catholic missionaries build up an atmosphere of comfort with their own capable hands. American missionaries are equipped with the sort of luxuries that have to be imported; but priests, who know they are to spend their lives in exile put up cool buildings and plant not only

vegetables but avenues of oranges, mangoes and tangerines, and vineyards wherever the vines will grow. They make their own beer, too, and liqueurs from wild honey or fruit. Usually there is wine on the table. Always there is someone who understands the art of the cuisine.

Kala mission comes after Kasanga, and this part of the lake might well be called "Crocodile Coast". Crocodiles are the great hazard; the women are taken as they scoop up water in jars; fishermen have to beat off the crocodiles while they haul their nets. I cannot leave Tanganyika without having more to say about the crocodile menace.

Crocodiles are more dangerous than snakes in this part of Tanganyika, but it was a snake that ruined my rest on board the *Liemba* one afternoon. I

awoke to the loud sound of frightened African voices; and there is no man in the world more capable of expressing fear than the African. Into this hubbub Zambesi Jim had flung himself angrily, shouting: "Captain! Askari!" Evidently he was under the impression that the noise was wilful and unprovoked. Then he saw the snake that had come on board at Kipili with the bales of bananas. It was whipping about the warm steel plates of the lower-deck over the engine-room, looking for a victim.

Zambesi Jim stopped shouting and killed the snake; whereupon the Africans changed their tune to laughter and tried to pretend that they had been amused by the antics of the snake. I wished that I had been able to book a better cabin, away from this heat and devilish humour.

An island called Nvuna was pointed out to me not long afterwards. Here, in fairly recent years, superstitious Africans and even Arab traders left offerings so that the great serpent of the island would allow them to go about their business in safety. Along this part of the coast whirlpools sometimes devour canoes, and waterspouts menace not only canoes but dhows and larger craft. There is a cape where canoes have to battle against strong currents and are sometimes overwhelmed.

Karema is the chief port of call on this run. It is the lake headquarters of the White Fathers, and the mission buildings tell a story. Under the red tiles are ramparts and loopholes. The place was often attacked by hostile Wabende, and every grass roof in the village had

to be covered with earth to prevent fire.

Fort Leopold, the Belgians called Karema, and when the White Fathers took over the village of freed slaves, in 1885 a fort stood beside the lake. (The convent of the White Sisters now stands on the site.) In those days the lake came almost to the doors of the mission buildings. Then the water fell back, as I have said, and today there is an avenue half a mile long leading from the mission to the beach; an avenue with rows of huts on each side. Excavation has proved that an older village stood between the present mission, on high ground, and the present beach. Sensational fluctuations must have occurred in the Tanganyika levels through the centuries.

Kibwesa Bay, to the north of Karema, is a famous spot for fishing. Bishop J.

Holmes-Siedle of the White Fathers, a more reliable authority than some, spent two hours fishing there with one companion some years ago; and they returned to the *Liemba* with sixty-five fish weighing over one hundred and sixty pounds. A professor from Oxford identified nearly one hundred different species at Kibwesa, ranging from “yellow-belly” to tiger fish.

This is where the mountains loom magnificently above the ship, and the coastline becomes a stretch of wildest Africa. It is the sort of territory where animals still unknown to science might lurk; and so I was not altogether surprised when a party of young zoologists from such places as Oxford, Bonn and Sweden joined the *Liemba* with their beards and battered luggage.

By this time the *Liemba* looked more like a cross-Channel packet than a

liner on a lake voyage lasting for weeks. Her lower-deck held at least three hundred laughing, chattering Africans; but they obviously enjoyed being in a crowd, even on board ship. The priest of the White Fathers was inhabiting a tiny lounge right aft; and any white passenger who owned a stretcher slept on deck. Zambesi Jim, who had been berthed rather unsuitably with an Anglican clergyman, had now found a bed in the dining-saloon. Arabs spread their mattresses on the steel plates outside my cabin, where the snake had been killed. Other Moslems unrolled prayer-mats on the fo'c'stle-head, facing Mecca, and prayed. Swahilis sang in the hold. On the fore-deck I often saw an African lady of quality admiring her jewellery, her silver bead necklace, red and black bangles and silver earrings. She wore a

white gown decorated with blue hearts.

Deckhands in the *Liemba* had white naval-type caps, blue jerseys, white shorts and (a strange, hardly nautical touch) blue puttees. As a contrast, the stewards were impressive in red fezzes with black tassels and white jackets.

It was a ship of bananas and dried fish, fowls and goats. Bananas lay ripening under my bath. I could smell the cheese in the large food safe just outside my cabin.

Opposite my suffocating inner cabin was a port-hole cabin occupied by four Muscat Arabs, the fish merchants I had watched in action at Mpulungu. They cooked in their cabin, and all the spices of the orient seemed to be simmering over their pressure stove. After a time, one of the Arabs suffered

an attack of malaria. At first he groaned. Then he raved in delirium on a curious rising note which was always the same. Zambesi Jim treated him with hot rum and lemon, giving him meanwhile a lecture on the idiocy of failing to take prophylactic medicine regularly.

In spite of all discomforts, the *Liemba* gave me a few moments of inspiration. Once she stopped under a great, forbidding mountain range, a boat was put over the side, and down the ladder went a young British anthropologist, his kit, hurricane lamps, food boxes and two African assistants who wore spectacles to show their superior culture.

“Sure this is the place you want?” inquired the captain of the *Liemba* anxiously. “There’s no way back, you know, if you’ve made a mistake”.

No way back! That sounded like the old Africa all right. Through the binoculars, far up on the mountain, I could see a green patch and a few huts. Those were the people the young anthropologist was going to study. In this branch of science you need isolation, and here was a place remote enough for great discoveries. No way back!

One of the other scientists knew the spot. He shouted down to the boat: “When you get to the shore, don’t go to the river mouth – go to the reeds on the right. You’ll see a little beach. There’s a way up from there.”

Yes, I could see the steep path up the mountain now, through the binoculars. Up there were the Buholoholo people, one of the small tribes of the territory. “This is adventure”, I thought. No way back!

I understand, however, that the *Liemba* will steam close inshore and sound her siren on her next trip southbound, so that the scientist will have a means of escape if he has failed to discover a route over the mountain and into the interior. The map shows no such route, but you never know.

A jingle of telegraph bells and the *Liemba* moved on. As I sat down to dinner that night, after whisky and soda, I thought of the young scientist writing his notes by the light of a hurricane lamp. Bah! I am much too fond of comfort nowadays, and though the *Liemba* is not comfortable I would rather be here than there. But it was not always like this.

Before long the *Liemba* is under Mkungwe Peak, and this is a peak indeed. It rises steeply from the lake one hundred miles to the south of

Kigoma; a peak with an evil reputation, climbed for the first time by a white man shortly before World War II. Six thousand feet above lake level, more than eight thousand above sea level – that is Mkungwe the giant with the steep, double-topped head. This great landmark is really an outcrop of a sunken ridge that stretches right across the lake, separating the northern and southern depths by a shallow area.

Many tribes met round about Mkungwe in the days when Tanganyika was the scene of great waves of human migrants coming from several directions. Congo tribesmen who settled on the mountain slopes declare that Mkungwe was once a great chief. Now the peak holds Mkungwe's spirit, and this spirit is a demon who demands sacrifices. Long ago, which may mean only half a century ago, the tribesmen

propitiated Mkungwe with young girls; and there is a suspicion that they left the victims at a spot where they would be devoured by pythons. Now a goat must suffice.

Mkungwe, say the tribesmen, allows no one to sit on his head. Anyone who violates this rule will die. It is a sacred mountain. The skulls of the dead Buholoholo kings are taken there, to a high cave. Members of certain tribes will climb a certain distance for ritual purposes, but no African living near Mkungwe would dare to take part in an expedition to the summit.

Mr. C. C. O'Hagan, who made the first recorded ascent of Mkungwe, also boldly gathered details of people who had defied Mkungwe's curse and paid the penalty. To the evidence of this reliable district officer may be added that of Bishop J. Holmes-Siedle and

then you have a mystery of Africa which some will not accept as pure coincidence.

Tales of Mkungwe's vengeance go back a long way. O'Hagan's porters told him of a party of tribesmen who had set the thick bush on the mountain alight so that they could climb more easily. The wind changed and all the men except two were burnt to death.

It seems that the first white victim climbed about two-thirds of the way to the Mkungwe summit in the German days. He was defeated by the steep face of the peak itself and returned to his base a sick man. Soon afterwards he died of dysentery.

Apparently the second white victim was a Belgian named Messenier who, in 1917, saw a herd of goats on the mountain. These goats had been



offered as a sacrifice to the mountain god, but Messenier was hungry. In spite of the protests of his African paddlers, he shot a goat for the pot. While returning to Karema by canoe, Messenier indulged in some fishing with dynamite. A stick exploded in his hands and he was killed instantly.

The next victim was the Colonel Charles Gray I have already mentioned as a fisherman. Gray was planning the Mkungwe climb and went out after buffalo to feed his carriers during the ascent. He was killed by a buffalo.

Some years before the successful climb by O'Hagan, another district officer had almost reached the summit. His porters informed O'Hagan that every member of the party had fallen asleep near the top and when they woke up they had decided to go no farther.

O'Hagan, an experienced mountaineer, found the ascent in 1939 extremely difficult. Wise old men of the villages at the foot tried to dissuade him. Nevertheless he secured five porters from another district and set out with a Whymper tent and rations of cassava and dried fish.

Nearly all the valleys on the Mkungwe slopes lead up to precipices. Dense forest covers the lower slopes; then tall grass is encountered; and finally the climber emerges into a bare world. At the end, the two approaches to the highest peak are both razorback ridges. O'Hagan climbed the western side, using the rope for the final ascent. Two porters reached the summit with him.

Mkungwe rewarded O'Hagan with an immense view of Lake Tanganyika lying deep in its basin, and ridge after

ridge of mountain disappearing into the miombo wilderness. The eastern face of the mountain was a sheer drop of two thousand feet. O'Hagan built a cairn, embedded a staff in it, and left a porter's loincloth flying there as a flag. He made one interesting discovery on the way down, a piece of broken clay pot under the shoulder of the peak. Long before him, some unknown African had risked Mkungwe's anger.

O'Hagan saw an eagle carrying a small baboon to its nest on the mountain. He rewarded his porters with beer and a fat goat after a journey of four days. As far as I know, O'Hagan had no reason to regret his adventure in the domain of Mkungwe. A second ascent was made in 1956 by a Mr. J. Procter, who also came to no harm.

Such is Mkungwe and the weird curse that seems to have been lifted in recent years. The giant dropped astern. *Liemba* steamed on past Cape Kabogo, where there is another evil spirit, dreaded by native fishermen in heavy weather. They listen to the water rushing into a hollow cave at the end of the cape, and they say nervously: "Kabogo is hungry and thirsty and calls for his beer and maize". So they leave the food they can often ill afford at the cave entrance, and go on fishing without fear of drowning. This is the foolish old Africa that survives in spite of all the White Fathers and others have done to lighten the darkness.

So the *Liemba* comes at last into the modern harbour of Kigoma, and another of my voyages has ended. I am something of a connoisseur of lake



Arab fisher merchants (centre) were among the author's fellow-passengers on the Liemba on Lake Tanganyika.

and river travel, in tropical Africa and as far away as Burma; and in the past I have said farewell to my landlocked liners with regret. The *Liemba* aroused no such feelings. Cabin nine was a horror, a black hole of Calcutta with a fan placed ingeniously over the washbasin so that the blades cut my head every morning as I shaved. The cargo-winch kept me awake every night. And I never really made friends with the four Arab fish merchants in the opposite cabin.

However, I will give the *Liemba* her due. The cook was good, and although I had never liked curry and rice, I tried his *dagaa* curry at the first lunch on board. It was served with mango chutney, coconut, tomato, onion and hot green peppers, and I was converted to curry from that meal onwards. His lentil curry was good, too, and he

knew how to fry a Nile perch. So the sleepless nights were not endured in vain. I have a new interest in life, curry and rice, and I have no doubt that I shall find it in many forms along the Great North Road.

## CHAPTER 8

### MYSTERIES OF THE CROCODILE

BEFORE I turn my back on the lake and walk round Kigoma there is a creature which I have mentioned before, the sinister crocodile. Along the lake shores, along certain stretches of the Great North Road, you may study the crocodile and hear queer tales.

Kigoma is the right place to open this discussion, for it appears to be the only meeting-place in all Africa of the West African long-nosed crocodile and the Nilotic species. Back in the German days a single West African specimen was shot there. Two more were killed near Kigoma between the wars.

West African crocodiles seldom attack people. The long nosed (or slender-nouted) species never exceeds eight

feet in length, and the two other species are dwarfs. Only in 1919 did Dr. Karl Schmidt of the Chicago Natural History Museum discover the Congo dwarf crocodile.

It is the Nilotic crocodile, of course, which is responsible for so many deaths in Tanganyika and elsewhere in East Africa. Some of them are monsters indeed. Early this century the Duke of Mecklenburg secured one near Mwanza that measured twenty-one feet six inches. Probably that is still a record for Tanganyika territory. Larger crocodiles have been shot elsewhere in Africa since then.

It is hard to discover the largest of all African crocodiles. The ferocious Nile species, found at intervals from Egypt to South Africa, is far larger than the West African crocodile and it claims more human victims than any other

African animal. This is the “leviathan” described in the book of Job. This is the species which is said to reach a length of twenty-five feet or more. Captain Riddick claimed a twenty-six footer in 1916 on the shores of Lake Kioga; and a French magistrate is said to have measured a twenty-nine footer at Lake Chad. These are interesting legends.

However, the settlers round the Murchison Falls in Uganda say that between the falls and Lake Albert there are still greater crocodiles which have not been disturbed for years. Some years ago Sir John Wardlaw-Milne declared that these crocodiles ran up to forty feet in length. This started a controversy and aroused a good deal of sarcasm. British Museum authorities could not find a Nile crocodile in their records longer than

nineteen feet six inches; but the Curator of Reptiles at the London Zoo was less critical and pointed out that there was a Madagascar species with a length of more than thirty-two feet. Sir Samuel Baker; explorer of the Nile, reported a thirty-foot crocodile. It is hard to believe in anything larger than that.

In the light of the African tropics, especially after heavy mist, animals often look twice their real size. Sometimes a warthog resembles a buffalo, and a stork may seem as large as an ostrich.

“Africa will never see the really large specimens of any form of wild life again”, an old hunter remarked to me not long ago. “Modern rifles and modern transport have made it impossible for the huge elephants, rhino, crocodiles – anything you like

to name – to survive nowadays. Most of the old records of last century, and up to World War I, will stand for all time.”

As you travel north along the Great North Road, the first crocodiles may be encountered when you cross the Limpopo. I revisited Liebig’s Drift when the Beit Bridge was opened, and the engineers told me that crocodiles had given them more trouble than lions while they were building the bridge. A crocodile measuring fifteen feet six inches and weighing over eight hundred pounds was shot eleven miles west of the bridge; certainly a very large specimen for South Africa.

Open the stomach of a crocodile (or a shark) and you may regret your curiosity. Remarkable finds have been made, some puzzling, others only too easily explained. Two Johannesburg

business-men named Develing and Hind were hunting along the Komati River in the Transvaal not long after World War I when they saw a large crocodile and fired at the same moment. Their soft-nosed bullets struck the neck and the crocodile died instantly. (When I went crocodile hunting my bullets always bounced off through failure to reach a vital spot.) Three young Shangaans heard the firing and were allowed to open the crocodile and take out certain parts for medicine. One of them shouted, thrust a hand into the stomach, and drew out a gold coin.

Coin after coin was recovered until twenty-five glittering sovereigns had been washed in the river. Three bore the head of President Kruger. The others were Victorian and Edwardian issues, the most recent bearing the date

1909. Milling had disappeared. Stones in the crocodile's stomach had worn and polished the sovereigns and reduced their weight.

A great deal of detective work was done to clear up this mystery without definite result. It is probable, however, that a native mine labourer was returning home to Portuguese East Africa with his savings in gold when the crocodile killed him. The spot where the crocodile was shot was nine miles from the border post of Ressano Garcia, where the native recruiting agency quarters were established.

One Kruger sovereign, six rough diamonds and a pair of native bangles were found in a crocodile shot close to Beit Bridge just before World War II. Here again the victim must have been a native, possibly from the Kimberley

diamond mines. Sir Hector Duff, who shot many crocodiles in Lake Nyasa, declared that nearly all aged crocodiles could be relied upon to produce relics of natives they had devoured, brass and ivory bracelets and other trinkets. Sir John Bland-Sutton described a large Nile crocodile which contained three hooves of a sheep, a donkey's bridle and a native's earring. Another crocodile had swallowed a fifteen-foot python. Then there was the Tanganyika game department report which listed the following stomach contents: one horse-shoe, a large piece of ivory tusk, antelope hooves, shells of tortoises, metal bangles and a strand of copper wire. The last item accounted for the disappearance of a boy who gathered firewood and carried the wire for fastening the bundles.



Twenty-two aluminium dog-licences and a diamond ring were recovered from a Zululand crocodile. The fondness of the whole species for dog-meat is only too well-known; but the diamond ring was never explained.

After these revelations it is a relief to hear of a crocodile, found dead in the Limpopo, which had eaten eleven baby crocodiles and choked with the twelfth firmly wedged in its throat. Baby hippo tusks are sometimes found, but the crocodile avoids the full-grown hippo, and comes off badly in a battle.

Everyone knows that the Nile crocodile is a ruthless, carnivorous killer, but there is still a mystery about these widespread killings. Why do crocodiles attack people in some areas and leave them untouched in others?

As I travelled along the shores of Lake Tanganyika in the *Liemba* I often heard this mystery discussed. It affected me personally because I am fond of swimming; and I made careful inquiries everywhere before entering the water. Some places were notorious for crocodile tragedies. At others the natives walked in the water without fear, not because of an absence of crocodiles, but because the humans and the crocodiles seemed to be on friendly terms, like cats and dogs in the same house.

Crocodile deaths are accepted by the African in much the same way that the city dweller regards traffic fatalities. They will always happen, and nothing much can be done about it. It is true that some enlightened tribesmen build stockades in the rivers, like shark-proof enclosures, so that their women

may draw water in safety. There are also villages where all the women use water gourds with long bamboo handles, so that they are never swept into the water by a sudden flick of the crocodile's tail. But there are still far too many places where, in the words of an official Tanganyika report, "the locals regard a monthly mortality of half a dozen women with complete indifference".

I think the key to the crocodile tragedies may be found in the past. Certain places throughout Africa have become known to the crocodiles as spots where abundant meals of flesh may be expected from time to time. In the long years of Africa's darkness, many a chief threw his victims to the crocodiles at a fixed place of execution on the river bank. Shesheke on the Zambesi was one such spot. Over a

century ago the paramount chief had his chair placed where he could watch slaves and criminals being flung to the crocodiles. It is not surprising to find that Shesheke still has a bad reputation for crocodiles, and even in recent years unwary natives have shared the fate of the chief's victims of long ago. Crocodiles have long memories, and those human sacrifices have never been forgotten.

That may not be the full explanation, but it does account for some of the deaths. It is also possible that after a crocodile has tasted human flesh by chance it becomes a "rogue" like the man-eating lions. A long diet of human flesh certainly makes a crocodile ferocious.

As you travel through Africa you will probably meet Africans who have lost an arm or a leg as a result of encount-

ers with crocodiles. It is possible to escape from a crocodile, just as determined swimmers have fought and escaped from sharks.

Even small boys and women have kept their wits about them when gripped by crocodiles and hit the snouts of their attackers until they were freed. One widely-reported attack occurred on the bank of the Mazoe River, Southern Rhodesia, shortly before World War II. A small crocodile seized a native baby. The mother hung on desperately to the crocodile's tail, and saved her baby from being carried into the water. Finally the crocodile released the baby. Though seriously mauled, the baby recovered completely.

Then there was the Rhodesian native who was sitting on a rock in the Lundi River washing his clothes when a crocodile gripped his arm. With great

presence of mind the native snatched his hat, stuffed it into a gap in the side of the crocodile's jaw and rammed it down the throat. The crocodile shifted its grip to the native's leg; but the man, who was powerful, tore his leg away, leaving a good deal of muscle in the crocodile's jaws. He managed to crawl to the river bank, where he was found and taken to hospital.

Near the Beit Bridge a native fought off a crocodile by pushing a walking stick down its throat. A more desperate encounter was reported from Salisbury when a native was treated in hospital after all the flesh had been stripped off his right arm. This man was being dragged into a deep pool. He pressed his thumbs into the crocodile's eyes. When that failed, he bit off one of the crocodile's claws. Biting is often effective. A native who

was caught by the leg in the Kafue River, Northern Rhodesia, bit the crocodile in a tender spot under the tail. He escaped and recovered in a Lusaka hospital; but he left three front teeth embedded in the crocodile. You have to bite pretty hard to get away from a crocodile.

Early this century the stationmaster at Kafue, a Scot, had two fine Airedales, Mac and Bess, and he was very proud of them. Near the bridge the river is wide and full of crocodiles, and the banks are flat. The Scot was walking along the footpath with Mac on the leash. He came to a native cutting bulrushes, slackened the leash while he stood talking. A moment later the leash was snatched from his hand and he saw Mac disappearing in the jaws of a crocodile.

The stationmaster swore vengeance on all crocodiles. Day after day he threw lumps of waterbuck into the river, always feeding the brutes at the same place. Then he inserted a six-inch fuse and a dynamite cartridge into a large leg of waterbuck. The crocodile he killed measured fourteen feet nine inches.

I suppose the classic escape from a crocodile was achieved by an elderly native who was dragged into the Olifants River in the Transvaal and taken to the crocodile's lair under the river bank. The native thought he was finished, but found that he could breathe in the darkness of the tunnel, as the crocodile had deposited him above water level. Crocodiles often treat their prey in this manner, leaving it for days before devouring it. The native saw a gleam of light at the

upper end of the lair, and soon he escaped through an ant bear hole. His troubles were not over, however, for the people of his village had seen him in the jaws of the crocodile, and when he crawled home with a lacerated thigh they hastened to their huts and barricaded the doors. They thought it was his ghost.

For centuries white travellers in Africa have been aware of the fact that tribal witchdoctors have some way of warding off crocodiles. A party of men, women and children must cross a river which is known to be swarming with crocodiles. The witchdoctor lights a fire, sprinkles a powder over the flames, then throws the ashes into the river. The people wade through the river in safety without seeing a crocodile's eyes or snout.

How is it done? Probably by means of a herb or other plant with properties which have not yet been studied by civilised botanists. African natives who are able use poison to catch fish would have little difficulty in making the water sufficiently unpleasant to keep away crocodiles for a time.

Clever witchdoctors also acquire such influence over selected crocodiles that they are able to call them out of the water. It is done by secret, judicious feeding, of course, but the witchdoctor makes up for the loss of an occasional goat by the gain in prestige.

Old explorers were always puzzled by the absence of crocodiles in a few East African lakes and rivers where they expected to find this common species. Lake Kivu in the Congo is free, for example, and so are Lakes George and Edward and the streams feeding them.

Only in recent years has Dr. E. B. Worthington, the British biologist, cleared up the problem. Fossils prove that crocodiles were once plentiful in those waters. The lake basins dried up, all crocodiles were exterminated. Waterfalls and dense tropical forests prevented the migration of a fresh supply of crocodiles to the former haunts of the species when the lakes filled up again.

Crocodiles are able to live on dry land for long periods, and they do migrate for short distances across suitable country. Sometimes they appear in unexpected places. Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia has grown in recent years; but it was a city shortly before World War II, when a small crocodile walked into a house in Central Avenue. This was not a stray pet, but a wild crocodile which must have made

its way from the Mafabusi River into a smaller stream running through the commonage about half a mile from the house.

Then in Livingstone I heard the true story of the crocodile that crawled across the Victoria Falls bridge. Two motorcyclists encountered it in the early morning and fetched a rope. They tied up that fully-grown crocodile, lifted it on to a motor-lorry, and drove it, still struggling violently, to the Victoria Falls Hotel. American visitors talked about that spectacle for a long time.

Among the deepest mysteries of the crocodile is its age. No one has ever been able to fix the life span of this tough reptile, and the guesses vary enormously. Major S. S. Flower, a zoologist, spent more than twenty years between the wars studying the

records in the zoos of the world and trying to establish animal ages. All he could say about the crocodile was that one of the Nile species lived for twenty years in captivity.

As the scientists have never succeeded in discovering the greatest age reached by a human being, one cannot blame the zoologists for a similar failure. Some say that the crocodile does not live longer than man. Certain sacred crocodiles have been known to African tribesmen for very long periods however, and there is a fairly reliable tradition along the shores of Lake Victoria that the sacred crocodile Lutembe lived for more than three centuries.

Pitman of Uganda, one of the greatest of game wardens, declared that he saw and photographed the oldest crocodile in Africa near the Murchison Falls

some years ago. It was so bulky with age that it could hardly drag itself along the ground. Measurements of footprints showed that it must have been at least five feet across the body. Pitman did not attempt to fix its age, but he discovered that this particular, noteworthy specimen had been known for generations in the neighbourhood. They had reason to remember it. This was a killer.

Many governments have tried to reduce the crocodile fatalities by offering rewards for crocodiles and their eggs. It was in German East Africa that a reward of one-quarter of a rupee (four pence half penny) was paid for each crocodile tail, regardless of size. Several experienced hunters formed a syndicate in Dar-es-Salaam, hired a large team of natives, and diverted the course of a crocodile-

infested river for about one thousand yards. Then they baited the arm of the river with game carcasses until the crocodiles swarmed into it. When the water was drained off, they had many thousands of crocodiles of all sizes. After that effort the Germans cancelled the rewards for tails and paid out only on eggs at the rate of one heller an egg.

Soon after World War I the British rulers of Tanganyika revived the rewards for eggs. The response was embarrassing. A wretched district officer at Mwanza on Lake Victoria in 1922 had to count more than one hundred thousand eggs within six months.

Baby crocodiles have their enemies in the shape of their own kind, monitor lizards and large birds. In the past, however, there was never any fear of

the crocodile becoming extinct. Now, owing to the demand for crocodile leather, the crocodile is a rarity in many stretches of water which once teemed with these killers. In fact, I have heard talk of protection so that the balance of nature will not be disturbed in certain lakes and rivers. A party of hunters were bringing in six hundred crocodile skins a week from Lake Victoria during a pre-war boom; but their haul was reduced to fourteen a week within a few months.

African natives have always used crocodile skins for helmets and shields. Some eat the flesh, and also the eggs from a captured crocodile before they have been laid. (Roosevelt ate scrambled crocodile eggs during his East African safari, and liked them.) But the African native has never been able to keep the crocodile



in check. Only the ruthless hunting of crocodiles for the belly skin, that makes such lovely handbags and shoes, has reduced the numbers in recent years.

Africans value certain organs of the crocodile for their magic. These parts, dried and powdered, are used (without any scientific reason) to induce fertility in women. Crocodile gall-bladders, on the other hand, contain a virulent poison. Witchdoctors have disposed of their enemies with this poison for thousands of years. It was known as far back as the German days that Tanganyika witchdoctors possessed an antidote to this poison. White science has not yet discovered it.

## CHAPTER 9

### GERMAN EAST AFRICA

GERMAN EAST AFRICA is a name still written plainly over many of Kigoma's public buildings and shuttered bungalows. No other European nation put up such palaces for their governors, such enduring stations along the railways, such homes for officials.

Kigoma, of course, is one of those places where you feel like a dozen shower-baths a day, followed by fresh clothes, thinner even than mine. If there is a cool season, those who live in the solid houses on the hillsides must enjoy their view across the lake to the blue Congo mountains.

As I gazed into the shimmering waves of heat I found myself thinking of the Tanganyika territory, a land with such contrasts as the ice-cap of Kiliman-

jaro, the hot plains and the coastline of five hundred miles all sweltering under the palms. It is a great squarish block of Africa between the lakes and the ocean. Eight million people, more than one hundred tribes, live in its rain forests, under its baobabs, in the miombo bush of the steppes, among the acacias of the dry places, in the mangroves and casuarinas of the tropical coast.

Up from Mbeya runs the Great North Road, reaching the centre of Tanganyika in the cool highlands and gardens of Iringa; driving northwards to the wide horizons and granite hills of Dodoma; on over the rocky ranges and thin forest and broken ground to the mangoes of Kondoa Irangi; to lovely Arusha on the mountain slopes; across the plains where some of the last great herds of wild game have been allowed



In a large open-air market at Kigoma I inspected the lake fish, the local sugar-cane and fruit.

to survive; past Kilimanjaro to Namanga of blessed memory on the Kenya border. You will see this road again as I keep my vow and travel by 'bus – but never by air.

Down from Kigoma runs the Central Railway, the link between the sea and the lake which the Germans finished just before World War I opened. You must travel with me on this line for a night and a day. Africa's railways, like Africa's 'buses, hold far more fascination than the air lines.

Now, after my reverie, I seem to have found the strength to walk up a wide red earth road, flanked by Indian *dukas* and Greek shops. In a large open-air market I inspected the lake fish, the local sugar cane and fruit. Then, to my relief; a friendly white resident (startled, apparently, by the

sight of another white face) approached and offered me a trip to Ujiji.

“You must go to Ujiji – no doubt you've heard of it – the place where Stanley found Livingstone”, remarked my benefactor. “It's only five miles away”.

I needed no urging. In my time I have stood in many famous places, from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to the inside of the arm of the Statue of Liberty in New York; from Napoleon's empty tomb on St. Helena to the Christ of the Corcovado in Rio. Here, in a remote corner of Africa, was another place of bygone drama filled with memories.

Ujiji, a huge city of slaves in the black past, is still the largest purely African town in East Africa. Livingstone, of course, was occupying an Arab house



Here in remote corner of Africa was another place of bygone drama filled with memories – Ujiji where Stanley found Livingstone.

on November 10, 1871, when Stanley arrived. Outside the house, and close to the lake shore, stood a mango tree, and there the two met. How was the site identified? It seems that few mango trees grew in Ujiji at that time, so Livingstone's tree near the water was easily remembered. The tree rotted and was cut down thirty years ago; but four young trees, grafted from the old stock, mark the traditional site.

German officials put up the first memorial. Belgians who occupied Kigoma during World War I improved on the German concrete slab. A British concrete obelisk was raised between the wars, with a bronze plaque provided by the Royal Geographical Society; and after World War II the present, dignified block of granite was placed on the site. If you find inspiration in relics, there is a

fragment of the original mango tree in the Africana Museum in Johannesburg.

No longer is the meeting-place within a stone's-throw of the lake. The level fell, as I have described, and now you must walk five hundred yards to the nearest beach. It was for this reason that Ujiji was abandoned as a harbour and Kigoma chosen.

Kigoma makes the departure of the train for the coast a social event. Nearly every white resident is either on the platform or drinking beer in the dining-car.

As the train moved out I noticed one especially jolly character raising his glass to friends on the platform. The sort of man I like to meet on a journey if he happens to know the country. This character finished his beer with

evident relish and then walked out of the saloon. I made inquiries. "Oh, that's the engine-driver", I was told. Then it came home to me that I was in easy-going tropical Africa again. Africa, where you can drive an engine from the comfort of the dining-car.

Someone told me that the German engineer who built this railway lived in the territory for seventeen years without going on leave. He lived on black coffee and cigars, bananas and biscuits, and a couple of bottles of Scotch a day. And he was never ill apart from a rare attack of malaria. Such achievements are remembered in the far corners of Africa, with admiration and envy. But the railway builders were not all of the calibre of that engineer. Beside the track there are mounds of cement and wooden crosses, and Arab tombs.

However, the death-roll of the railway was insignificant compared with the many thousands of men, women and children who dropped along the old slave route which the railway follows most of the way from coast to lake. Arab traders first pushed inland with brass-wire and cloth early last century; and soon they were returning with slaves, each male slave carrying a tusk. (It is said that some of the more enterprising Arabs crossed Africa to Loanda, but these great journeys have gone unrecorded.) Cameron and other white explorers followed the narrow slave trails, living as the Arabs did on game and wild fruits and the food of native villages. The march from Bagamoyo on the coast to Ujiji and back might last a year; but the profits were enormous. Calico known as "Amerikani" fetched three times the coast

price when it reached Ujiji. And a slave bought in Ujiji quadrupled in value if he reached the coast alive. Many did not. The route was drenched with blood and littered with skeletons.

After the slaves came the famous Zanzibar carriers, those black adventurers of fine physique who worked for ten rupees a month and their food. It was a point of honour with these men to carry their head-loads until they dropped. Often a caravan marched off five hundred strong, with a headman to fifty porters and an askari, armed with a Snider carbine, to every fifteen. For a long periods last century, one hundred thousand porters marched through Tabora every year.

So the train moves eastwards, over the old trail of cruelty and suffering, in the late afternoon. Some of the wooden coaches must go back to the German

regime, but my metal coach is modern and I have seen nothing like it elsewhere. It was built in Canada. The designer wisely included a fan, a clever little table over the wash-basin, and all sorts of handy lockers and stowage spaces which I had never seen in a coupe before. After cabin number nine in the *Liamba*, this was comfort. Mr. Singh, the bearded and turbaned Sikh conductor, really made me feel at home.

I shall always remember this railway as the "honey barrel line". Though the *miombo* forest looks barren it must be rich in honey, for old baobabs and other high trees are festooned with hives.

These cylindrical hives of bark are each about four feet long. The hives slants a little, the upper end being plugged with leaves to keep out the



rain while the lower end is left open. Native bee-keepers often bait the cylinder with aromatic leaves.

At a wayside station the train poured out its passengers of all classes to watch a Wanyamwezi bee *fundi*, a local expert, gathering honey. Equipped with a crazy ladder and a lighted torch, he reached the first hive, set the grass plug on fire, and blew the smoke through the cylinder. The dazed bees were soon driven out of the lower end, but some were angry enough to turn on the *fundi*. I was standing at a safe distance, and could not see whether the man received any stings. If he did, he disregarded the pain and concentrated on hauling out the comb by hand and dropping it into the gourds fastened round his waist. After all, this was the raw material of the delicious Kangara beer, well worth a little pain.

Tanganyika has some of the cleverest honey hunters in Africa, men who live close to nature on a diet of fruit and honey. They find their way in the trackless bush with never a sign to guide them from one hive to the next. The honey bird is their friend. They never starve.

No great metropolis stands beside the Central Railway. It is an event when Tabora junction is reached after breakfast; Tabora in its waste of bush. Yet it is a place of some character. Arabs left carved doors here in their old trading post; carved doors to the storehouses that once held slaves and ivory and gunpowder. Most of the trees round Tabora were planted in the Arab days, lemons and date palms, pawpaw's and mangoes. German officials laid out an Unter den Linden from their boma to the railway station.

Visitors are shown a house said to have been shared by Livingstone and Stanley for a month. I believe the real house has gone, though the fine doorway is in the Africana Museum, Johannesburg. Livingstone went out through that doorway to his death; and the faithful bearers carried his body to that house (while the explorer Cameron was living there) long afterwards. Cameron wanted to bury Livingstone at Tabora, but the bearers knew their master's wishes. "No, no, very great man – cannot bury here", they declared. So the body went on, down to the coast, on to Westminster Abbey. That march ranks high among the epics of Africa:

Tabora was a meeting-place of the caravan routes when it was founded early last century. Sultan Siki ruled the district for many years, and as

paramount chief of the Wanyamwezi he robbed all caravans unless they paid him tribute. Siki made the mistake of killing a German trader and seizing his ivory towards the end of last century. German troops arrived, and Siki attacked the column. In the end the Germans cornered Siki in his fort at Tabora. Siki went into the powder magazine with his family and committed suicide in an explosion which is still remembered in the town.

So a German boma arose and dominated the scene. It still stands on a koppie just outside the town, where the Kilimatinde and Bismarckburg roads meet. They put up handsome granite buildings with red iron roofs. And the German eagle flew over the streets of thatched houses, the shaded gardens and mango trees that Living-

stone and Stanley and Cameron and Emin Pasha had known.

Climbing gradually out of Tabora, the line takes you past the circular Wanyamwezi huts to the watershed of the Atlantic and Indian oceans. (Somehow I missed the stone pyramid marking the highest point, 4,350 feet.) Itigi and Manyoni pass by. Saranda is a station with a view, and then the line cuts the Great Rift Valley near its southern end. When you see red earth and the square mud houses known as *tembes*, then you have come to the Wagogo country. Dodoma is at hand.

Dodoma, on its thorn-bush and baobab plain, was one of those places where I had touched down (and eaten a marvellous breakfast) without seeing anything beyond the aerodrome. This time I came to know the cool, German-built hotel, the old German

boma, the town across the railway tracks, the market place of the cattle-loving Wagogo people, the Indian bazaar. I bought strong medicine for the cough the *Liemba* and given me. And that night, after a wholesome dinner and a pint of wine, I went early to bed and lay in the heart of Tanganyika thinking of other days.

We called it “German East” in World War I, and I might have found myself in that campaign if I had not chosen the Royal Flying Corps and gone to England instead. Many of my friends of those days had served in “German East”.

As a general, Smuts was not at his best in that campaign. He thought it was over when Von Lettow was only about to start his long guerrilla tactics. Smuts was magnificent, however, when he gave his impressions of the country to

an intelligent audience. I found an old report which his biographers have missed.

Smuts declared: "One of the first discoveries you make in leading an army is that the books of the travellers are mostly wrong. What to them was a paradise of plant and animal life is to you, moving with your vast impedimenta, a veritable purgatory. Never before, probably, had such things been seen – the stillness, the brooding silence of the vast primeval forest where few white men had ever been before and the only path is the track of the elephant. The silence of the forest stretches for hundreds of miles in all directions. Then it is broken by the tramp of tens of thousands of armed men, followed by the guns and transport of a modern army with its hundreds of motor-lorries, its miles of

wagons, its vast concourse of black porters."

That was the campaign in which Tanganyika tribesmen ran at the sight of Smuts's mounted commandos, for they had never seen a horse before. Perhaps they were more startled by the horses than by the first aeroplanes, flown by officers of the South African Aviation Corps, that forgotten pioneer unit from which the South African Air Force arose.

More than fifty thousand fighting men were in the field against Von Lettow at one time; while Von Lettow started with eight hundred white men (including the *Konigsberg* naval contingent) and four to five thousand askaris. How did he contrive to remain in the field until the armistice? It was iron discipline combined with a system of rewards; for the askaris were given

their share of meat and drink, clothes and women, when they captured a village. His troops, white and black, remained with him until the surrender in Northern Rhodesia. Major-General J. J. Collyer summed up correctly when he said: "Many good cards were in the hand of the German commander, and he rarely failed to play them with good effect".

It was a war in which the climate was the chief enemy. German military doctors ran out of medicines at one stage and had to make their own quinine from bark supplied by planters in the Usambara mountains. Another bark was used for bandages, and raw cotton was made up into surgical cotton-wool. Hippo and elephant fat, and a mixture of wax and groundnut oil, went into ointments.

Several of the German doctors were killed in action, and one was trampled to death by an elephant. During the long march the army surgeons carried out a number of major operations and removed many an appendix. Children were born, for the askaris had their wives with them. The wounded were carried in hammocks.

White and black kept alive on primitive African diet. Meat, meat, meat ... buck and hippo and elephant. Gruel, manioc and yams. Bananas, guavas, pineapples and wild tree fruits. Roasted maize as a coffee substitute. Mushrooms and wild honey.

Four years of war, and the campaign cost Britain and South Africa two hundred million pounds.

South African soldiers returned from German East Africa with all sorts of

war souvenirs – apart from malaria. Some brought coins. Maria Theresa dollars of silver, dated 1780 and bearing the head of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, were used in East Africa long before the Germans arrived. This was the “trade dollar” preferred by great numbers of Africans who distrusted other, less impressive coins. South Africans brought these massive and romantic coins home from East Africa during both world wars.

Then there were silver rupees and nickel and bronze heller issued by the German East Africa Company, and later by the German colonial authorities. All these were minted in Berlin. But the wartime issues formed the most interesting currency of all; emergency banknotes printed on leather or ordinary paper; hellers in

copper and brass; and finally the gold coin known as the “Tabora sovereign”. This is still surrounded by mystery.

South Africans who became possessed of “Tabora sovereigns” probably heard the story that these handsome coins had reached East Africa by submarine. According to another rumour, supplies reached Von Lettow by Zeppelin. Both stories were untrue. A German airship set out for East Africa but she was recalled. Two blockade runners did reach the East African coast, but they were merchant ships, not submarines. One of them, the *Kronberg*, was shelled by H.M.S. *Hyacinth* in 1915 and beached at Manza Bay. In spite of damage, the Germans landed five million cartridges and two thousand Mauser rifles from her. Another steamer, the *Marie*, arrived in 1916 with postage stamps

and paper for banknotes. (Dr. H. Schnee, the governor, thought the British were planning to flood the country with counterfeit German notes.) Neither of these ships carried the so-called "Tabora sovereigns".

Yet they were beautiful coins of professional appearance. Experts could not understand how they had been minted in the colony, especially in view of wartime difficulties. They thought that either the dies, or the whole issue, had come through the blockade from Germany.

I have examined the "Tabora sovereign" in the King George V Memorial Museum at Dar-es-Salaam. There is another specimen in the British Museum, London; and I suppose a few score of these rare coins are still treasured by South Africans who fought in the campaign. Collect-

ors pay about twelve pounds or more apiece for them, I believe, at the present time.

Stare hard at this mystery. It is not really a sovereign at all, but a fifteen-rupee gold piece. A sovereign must bear the ruler's head. This coin carries the Imperial German eagle, crowned, with the words "Deutsch-Ostafrika 15 Rupien"; and on the reverse there is an elephant with upraised trunk shown against a range of mountains with six peaks. The coin is dated 1916.

These six peaks form a minor mystery. No one has been able to identify a Tanganyika mountain range with six peaks. But the main mystery lies in the minting of this gold coin. Before the year 1916, the Germans used the gold coins of the Fatherland in East Africa, and only lesser coins were minted specially for the colony. Where was

the “Tabora sovereign” made and why was it issued?

It was made in Tabora, as the name signifies. The gold came from a mine in the Sekenke area which had been opened in 1909 and which was yielding two ounces to the ton. At the time, however, very few people knew the secret of the “Tabora sovereign”. Comparatively few of them were minted, whereas other coins were being turned out by the thousand.

Tabora became the capital of German East Africa after Dar-es-Salaam had been evacuated. An acute shortage of money developed, and so Dr. Schnee asked the railway workshops at Tabora to set up a makeshift mint. Mr. Voigt, a railway engineer, produced the designs, and the engraving was carried out by a clever Singhalese jeweller named Vattiare.

Machinery found on board the blockade runner *Kronberg* was adapted for the task. Brass and copper for the various heller denominations came from the engine-room fittings of the cruiser *Konigsberg*, the *Koenig*, and other wrecked and abandoned ships. British shell and cartridge cases also went into the melting pot, and small coins to the value of one million rupees were minted at Tabora. “Interim notes” were also printed with values from one to five hundred rupees.

Thus the Germans were able to pay their way. Indian merchants, and the army, received paper money. Some of the high German officials at base were paid for a time in the gold “Tabora sovereigns”. But the day came when the mint had to be shut down and the seat of government moved. Tabora



was occupied by the Belgian forces in September 1916.

German paper money and brass coins were not recognised by the invading armies. German silver and copper coins remained in use until they were replaced by British currency. The status of the "Tabora sovereign" does not seem to have been defined. Perhaps a definition was unnecessary. This piece of eighteen-carat gold, smaller than a British sovereign but very handsome, was soon in such demand as a souvenir that the value rose to nearly four pounds.

Naturally, the shrewd, gold-loving Indian traders did their best to corner "Tabora sovereigns". Possibly they were responsible for a rumour that these popular coins were being counterfeited in the Zanzibar bazaars.

For a time the value fell and the Indians hoarded their treasure.

It is hard to establish the facts after all this time, but coin collectors in Tanganyika have done their best. The official issue of "Tabora sovereigns" appears to have been limited to about sixteen thousand. There is a strong probability that others were minted surreptitiously, not in Zanzibar, but by someone connected with the German regime. Yet these counterfeit "sovereigns" contained the same amount of gold as the genuine article. It seems that the counterfeiters came into possession of the elephant die, and engraved their own reverse with little differences.

However, the story of the "Tabora sovereign" is a controversial matter in the land of its birth. No one has given a satisfactory explanation of the origin

of the coin. It has been suggested that the Germans minted the sixteen thousand coins as “presents and souvenirs”; but this does not seem a reasonable occupation for a hard-pressed government in a state of siege. If there had been a great demand for gold, on account of lack of faith in paper money, Dr. Schnee could have ordered the mint to produce far more than sixteen thousand pieces. He had the bullion. But there is no evidence that the traders and army contractors were refusing the other German money. They would have been dealt with if they had dared to refuse.

I can only imagine that some far-sighted German official anticipated the post-war inflation and the collapse of the mark. Possibly the same unknown man was responsible for the

counterfeit gold coins that followed the genuine issue.

Where are the “Tabora sovereigns” now, apart from rare examples in museums and the homes of old soldiers? I think the Indians cornered most of them, and such coins are probably still being hoarded.

Collectors love “siege coins”, the emergency issues produced amid the strain and drama of war. These are indeed coins with a story, and the “Tabora sovereign” possesses the added interest of mystery. A collection of these strange German pieces, whether false or genuine, makes a nice little heirloom nowadays.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE SULTAN'S SKULL

THIS IS east Africa's strangest tale, and as one of the many who failed to find the Sultan Mkwawa's skull it has a peculiar fascination for me.

If you find the story not only strange but incredible, please start your research with clause 246 of the Treaty of Versailles, which reads:

“Within six months of the coming into force of the present Treaty, Germany will hand over to His Britannic Majesty's Government the skull of the Sultan Mkwawa, which was removed from the Protectorate of German East Africa and taken to Germany.”

Sultan Mkwawa was the “Black Napoleon” of a dark stretch of Africa, the only native chief of his time to

defeat all invaders, first the Arabs, then the ferocious Masai and later the Germans. The Germans finished him in the end, and cut off his head. But the end was a long time coming.

If you know pretty little Iringa on the Great North Road, a town of gardens on a hill, then you have seen the old sultan's country. This is the land of the Wahehe tribe, a Bantu people of dubious origin. They entered the southern part of Tanganyika early last century as conquerors, shouting their war cry: “He, hehe, he he!” Burton the explorer described them accurately as a “very arrogant and haughty band of robbers armed with long throwing-spears”.

It was the Arab influence that led to the Wahehe chiefs being known as sultans. Zulu influence came from the neighbouring Wangoni tribe, Zulu

offshoots using the Zulu spears and shields. Sultan Muyugomba (Mkwawa's father) defeated the Wangoni and then built up his own army with Zulu weapons and discipline. At the time of his death about eighty years ago, Muyugomba was ruling one-third of the present Tanganyika territory.

Mkwawa was an even greater warrior than his father. A huge, muscular man, he is said to have resembled Cetewayo, the Zulu king. Bold and shrewd, Mkwawa was also greedy. He plundered so many caravans that the Arabs dared not pass through his country without paying heavy tribute.

When the Germans came on the scene they heard of the troublesome Mkwawa, but felt that he was too remote and secure on his plateau far inland and five thousand feet above sea level. Major von Wissmann,

explorer and German emissary, recruited Sudanese soldiers and Wangoni warriors from the Portuguese colony; and he was eager to teach Mkwawa a lesson. He planned to use the Masai as allies, but his scheme was never carried out.

Meanwhile, news of the German infiltration had reached the crafty Mkwawa. He sent spies to the coast. As a result of their description of the powerful white strangers, Mkwawa ordered two trusted elders to go to the Germans at Bagamoyo with presents of ivory and cattle. Von Wissmann received these envoys cordially and invited Mkwawa to visit him in person. Mkwawa was suspicious, and he refused. The raiding of caravans went on, to the great annoyance of the Germans.

Germany took formal possession of the territory on January 1, 1891. Six months later Von Wissmann's successor, Lieutenant Baron von Zelewsky, decided that Mkwawa could not be allowed any longer to hamper trade with the interior. Von Zelewsky set out from Kilwa on the coast with more than one thousand men, no mean expedition in those days. Besides the irregular askaris there were many trained soldiers with field guns. Von Zelewsky thought that this show of force would ensure an immediate surrender.

Mkwawa's scouts reported this column promptly, and Mkwawa sent envoys with presents to meet the Germans and learn what they wanted. Owing to a misunderstanding the envoys were fired on, and only one

returned to Mkwawa to announce the bloodshed.

Mkwawa, who might have been reasonable, ordered the war trumpets to be sounded and led an army equal in size to the German expedition into the Katonga valley near Lugalo. He knew that Von Zelewsky must approach Iringa through the valley, and there an ambush was prepared.

Mkwawa instructed his scouts to wait until the entire German column had passed into the valley before giving the signal for the attack. Once the enemy was in the trap, the call of the spur-fowl would be imitated and then Mkwawa's warriors would hurl themselves on the invaders before the Germans could bring their guns into action. Mkwawa knew that his old-fashioned muskets would be useless against the rifles of the German-

trained soldiers. He relied on surprise. Muskets could be used in defending the fortress, but in the ambush his men would wipe out the German column with their spears.

Everything would have gone according to plan, the German column would have died to the last man, if a real spur-fowl had not flown up and given the typical call. By that time three-quarters of the German column had passed into the ambush. The Wahehe warriors rushed out of hiding and were on them in a flash. Ten Germans, two hundred and fifty askaris lay dead within a few seconds. Three field guns, hundreds of rifles and much ammunition were captured by Mkwawa. Von Zelewsky extricated the rest of his column from this shambles with great skill and retreated

to the coast. For some reason Mkwawa did not follow him.

Mkwawa had long been in the habit of issuing magic medicine to his warriors before going into battle. Now all the natives of the territory regarded him as a wizard, unconquered and unconquerable.

At this point, of course, the Germans realised that Mkwawa would have to be defeated before they could colonise the southern highlands. The officer who dedicated himself to this task was one of those unusual characters who flourished in the Africa of last century. Known as Von Prince or Bwana Sakkarani (“he who knows no fear”), he was in fact a British subject named Tom Prince.

Prince’s grandfather was a Scot, while his father, born in Mauritius, served

Queen Victoria as a police officer on the island. Prince's mother was German, and when the father died she took Prince to Germany to be educated. Tom Prince went in due course to the military school at Kassel, where he met Von Lettow-Vorbeck.

Prince was posted to German East Africa, where he took part in campaigns against the Arabs. After the defeat of Von Zelewsky, the governor (Von Soden) instructed Prince to watch Mkwawa. It was rumoured that Mkwawa intended to attack the coast.

Mkwawa, who was no fool, knew very well that there would be repercussions. He built himself a walled city at this period, a fortress which may still be seen at Old Iringa, ten miles from Iringa. Through the enclosure ran the Ruaha river. The walls were eight feet high and consisted of two lines of

stakes filled in with mud and stones. Fourteen gateways were designed so that the defenders could cover them easily. Bastions were built at intervals of three hundred yards. Mkwawa's fortress was eight miles in circumference. He had armed his garrison with muskets and gunpowder which he had received from the Arabs in exchange for ivory. Each warrior was granted cloth and beads for his wives. The fortress was stocked with grain and cattle. Part of Mkwawa's army were in scattered settlements, but the sultan's own bodyguard of three thousand men lived in the fortress. Flushed with his victory over the Germans and entrenched in his fortress, Mkwawa must have felt reasonably secure.

Prince knew it would be no easy task. Nevertheless, he declared that it was

shameful to think that the German dead were lying unburied year after year where they had fallen during the ambush. It was also humiliating to face a situation in which a German officer could not enter a large area in a German protectorate.

Prince planned revenge as though Mkwawa was a personal enemy. He sent messengers to tell Mkwawa what the Kaiser would do to him when the day came. He entered into alliances with neighbouring chiefs, and surrounded Mkwawa's kingdom with German outposts. Prince drilled and marched his askaris until they were as smart as Prussians, and almost as efficient. But it was not until September 1894 that the Germans were ready to attack Mkwawa's stronghold. Colonel von Schele was in command. He had sixteen officers (including

Prince), seventeen German non-commissioned officers and two thousand askaris. There was no ambush this time. German field guns pounded the walls of the fortress in vain, however, and Von Schele realised that he would have to take it by storm. In a dawn attack the Germans placed ladders against the walls, climbed over with machine-guns and rifles, and fought from hut to hut until they had driven the garrison out. It was a bloody battle, and when it was all over the Germans found that Mkwawa had escaped with many of his bodyguard.

Prince blew up Mkwawa's store of gunpowder. He roamed the scene of the ambush, identified the skeletons of brother officers, and swore again that he would not rest until Mkwawa had been killed.



This was the opening of a guerrilla war. Little did Prince know that it would last for four years.

Mkwawa revealed as great skill as guerrilla fighter as he had done previously in pitched battles. His people showed him a degree of loyalty that the Germans had not believed possible. Mkwawa always had food. Often the Germans came upon great dumps of food and liquor which the Wahehe tribesmen had placed along the trails of the unmapped bush so that their old sultan would not go hungry. And always Mkwawa evaded the German patrols. His people never failed to warn him. No wonder the Germans offered a reward of five thousand rupees (then £375) for Mkwawa's head. Closer and closer marched the Germans.

A German military report of this period stated: "Mkwawa exercised an inexplicable influence over the natives. When the pursuing troops surprised his camp, Mkwawa's body-guard would hurl themselves blindly on the soldiers, sacrificing themselves merely to give Mkwawa the chance of escape. No scheme for his capture was possible, and no one even knew what he looked like."

Prince, now Captain von Prince, did not share that view. After leave in Germany he set up his headquarters near Iringa and bided his time. By bribes and threats he persuaded some of Mkwawa's followers to desert the hard-pressed sultan. Prince was evidently something of a diplomat, for he broke down Mkwawa's supernatural reputation, won over Mkwawa's wives and close relations

to the German cause, and isolated Mkwawa himself. At Christmas time in 1896, Prince installed Mkwawa's brother Mpangire as "viceroy".

Still the strange influence of Mkwawa lingered among the Wahehe people. Mpangire turned out to be anything but a genuine convert to the German regime. He was planning to re-join Mkwawa with a strong following at the right moment, but the alert Prince got wind of the plot. In February 1897 the execution of Mpangire was carried out in public, with all the grim ceremony which the Germans knew how to organise round the scaffold.

Mkwawa remained a free man, closely pursued but always escaping, and always hidden in some new place by his devoted tribesmen. After four years of this desperate existence, however, Mkwawa's following was

reduced to two of his wives, one warrior named Musigombo, and a boy of fifteen.

Prince had kept a trusted soldier, Sergeant-Major Merkl, on the trail with fifteen askaris. Mkwawa realised that the net was closing in on him. On July 1898 he spoke to this last remnant of his great tribe. "I see it is now time for me to die", Mkwawa declared. "Do you agree to accompany me?" All four agreed, but the boy had made up his mind secretly to avoid this death.

Mkwawa shot his wives. They were in the mountain forest, and at this point the boy dashed away among the trees. Mkwawa and Musigombo tried to catch him, but failed.

The boy was still running for his life down the hillside when he encountered Merkl and the askaris. Merkl caught

him and gained an idea of Mkwawa's position. While he was advancing on the spot, Merkl heard a shot.

"We took off our boots and kit and crawled on our stomachs to a baobab which I climbed, but I could see nothing", Merkl reported. "We crawled on over stony ground to a dry watercourse and saw Mkwawa's camp at last. We now saw two figures apparently asleep, one of whom the boy said was Mkwawa himself. We aimed, fired and ran on. Both figures were dead. Mkwawa had been dead for about an hour. He had clearly killed himself with the shot we had heard."

Mkwawa had shot himself in the head, for his rifle was pointing to his mouth. Apparently he had intended to fall dead among the burning logs so that his body would be destroyed; but he

fell to one side. Merkl's shot had entered Mkwawa's stomach.

Merkl added that a number of Wahehe came to the spot and remained for a long time in silence. One of them remarked at last: "He died like an eagle during the last minutes of his freedom, for like an eagle he could not live in captivity".

Merkl, with the reward of five thousand rupees very much in his mind, ordered one of his askaris to hack off Mkwawa's head. He carried it to Captain von Prince at Iringa. Frau Magdalene von Prince was shown the ghastly trophy and described it in her diary. This evidence proved of the utmost value long afterwards.

"Mkwawa had a small face with strange slit eyes", she wrote. "His prominent chin gave his head a look of

energy. On the forehead there was a bump due to a blow from a spearhead. The bullet wound disfigured the face of the skull.”

So the dreaded Mkwawa was dead and beheaded, but his deeds lived on in the songs of the Wahehe people. Six years afterwards the anniversary of his death was celebrated with such fervour that the Germans expected a rebellion and took action. An officer named Stierling, commandant of the military post at Rungemba, summed up the German conquest as follows:

“Mkwawa is dead by his own hand, after wandering round like a hunted beast in his own country. His brother Mpangire and four of his half-brothers have died on the gallows. His sons have been sent to the coast, where homesickness and the hot unhealthy climate will soon carry off these

children of the high mountains. The death of Zelewski and his comrades has been terribly avenged, and bloodily has Mkwawa’s repeated treachery been punished. The Hehe kingdom, with its barbaric splendour, is no more.”

Such were the German colonial methods. The same officer described the graveyard of the Hehe chiefs, each grave marked with a fine elephant tusk. The Germans seized the tusks and flattened the whole enclosure.

It seems that the ruthless German policy was successful. When the Maji-Maji rebellion broke out in 1905, the Wahehe did not take part. Yet the resentment against the Germans smouldered; memories of the great days of Mkwawa remained bright; and somehow the belief grew up among the Wahehe that if only the skull of

Mkwawa could be restored to its proper resting place, great prosperity and lasting peace would come to the tribe.

When the forces under General Northey reached Iringa during World War I, they received a great welcome and much help from the Wahehe people. Among the invaders was a staff officer named Owen Letcher, a Rand mining engineer, hunter and explorer before the war, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Letcher told me that he first heard the story of the skull in 1916, when Iringa was near the front-line and he was recovering from malaria in the hospital there. As far as I remember, a missionary who had been there before the war had given him the details and his interest was aroused immediately. “Many of us will recall the juicy fruit

in the Mission gardens, the hidden bottles of beer, the little scraps that we had outside the town, and some, perhaps, will remember the cool, clean linen of the hospital when life seemed rusted through”, Letcher wrote long afterwards. I know that the skull gave him something to think about, and he pursued the quest of the skull until he died. Indeed, I would not be telling the story of the skull now if Letcher had lived. Though he never solved the mystery, it was his story; and when he died in 1943 it was a mystery still.

Wahehe spokesmen soon put this matter which was so close to their hearts before the new government. Official action started in November 1918, when the British official at Iringa wrote to Sir Horace Byatt, the first British Administrator of the ex-German colony, pointing out that the

Wahehe people would never be satisfied until the skull of Mkwawa was restored. The request went through the proper channels until it reached the Treaty of Versailles, as I have described. In fact, the sultan's skull received the same consideration by the peace-makers as the art treasures which the Germans had stolen from Louvain.

Of course the Germans were willing to return the skull, but soon they were faced with a mystery. According to the Wahehe, the skull had been dried and sent first to Dar-es-Salaam, then to Germany. No definite record could be found, but certain officials thought the skull had gone to a museum in Berlin as an anthropological specimen. German scientists had forwarded skulls and skeletons from all their colonies. Such collection had been

done on a large scale in German South West Africa, where Bushman skulls had been in great demand; and there was no doubt that this scientific mania had spread to German East Africa.

Unfortunately the Germans, in spite of their reputation for thoroughness, had not seen fit to label the skulls with names. They were concerned only with racial characteristics and cephalic indices.

The position was complicated still further by a German officer's statement that Mkwawa's skull had been stolen from the home of Captain von Prince and buried secretly with Mkwawa's body near his old fortress. Von Prince had been killed in action at Tanga in 1914, so that no evidence was available from the man who had paid the reward and then, in all probability, forwarded the head to

Dar-es-Salaam. Careful inquiries showed that the story of the burial of the skull was untrue. And why should the Wahehe be pressing for the return of the skull if they had indeed recovered it soon after Mkwawa's death?

So the search went on. According to Letcher's written statement, delegates from the Wahehe tribe sailed to England and impressed upon Mr. Lloyd George the necessity for a thorough search. I have been unable to confirm this picturesque sidelight; but it is clear that many ethnographical collections in Germany were inspected. Years passed, and in 1931 the German museum authorities forwarded three skulls to the Wilhelmstrasse. After a further examination the German foreign minister stated in an official diplomatic note that the German experts had failed to reach a

decision. However, the three possible skulls were sent to London.

Downing Street reported this diplomatic trick to the governor of Tanganyika. Then the correspondence (and presumably the skulls) went into various pigeonholes.

The affair reached the newspapers and this publicity brought to light a man named Henschel, of Flensburg, who declared that he could secure the sultan's skull, and was prepared to sell the information. He said that it had been embalmed. However, nothing came of Henschel's offer.

I was in Germany in the summer of 1931, gathering material by day for a book I was writing on South West Africa, and visiting such places as St. Pauli in Hamburg and the Kurfurstendamm in Berlin by night. A pleasant

blend of work and entertainment, research and Rhine wine. Owen Letcher had heard of this enterprise, and wrote to me on the subject close to his heart. "It seems that the Berlin museums have been searched pretty thoroughly, and I believe the skull may be stored away somewhere else", Letcher wrote. "Try the Hamburg collections if you have time, and remember that all museums have more exhibits in their cellars and attics than they display in their showcases".

So there I was, aided by a member of the South African trade commissioner's staff, burrowing in the museums of Hamburg for the sultan's skull. It did not take me long to discover why the skull had not been found. All museums seem to accumulate more specimens than they are ever able to examine. Even the packing-

cases from far corners of the world sometimes remain unopened. I wrote back to the enthusiastic Letcher and told him regretfully that I saw no hope of identifying the skull.

Letcher was not discouraged. He confessed to a "mischievous interest" in the skull, and never lost it. Early in 1934 he wrote to the Secretariat in Dar-es-Salaam raising the unwelcome topic once more, and inquiring whether any clues had been discovered.

Mr. G. J. Partridge, replying on behalf of the acting chief secretary to the government, stated: "No accurate information regarding the skull of Sultan Mkwawa is available. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that the skull has completely disappeared and its whereabouts, if it is still in existence, is unknown."



Owen Letcher died in 1943. World War II came to an end, and only the inconsolable Wahehe remembered the skull. They nagged various Tanganyika officials, but not until September 1951 did they find a sympathetic ear. Then the governor, Sir Edward Twining (now Lord Twining), visited Iringa and heard the oft-told tale from Adam Sapi, reigning chief and grandson of Mkwawa. This strange chapter of Africa aroused the interest of the governor as it had gripped Owen Letcher. For two years Sir Edward wrote to various authorities without success. At last a letter from the British High Commissioner in Germany suggested that the skull might be in the Museum für Volkerkunde in Bremen. All previous searchers had overlooked the fact that this museum seemed to have special-

ised in skulls from German East Africa.

Sir Edward Twining felt that he was nearing the end of a long trail.<sup>3</sup> He was in Europe himself in 1953, and he decided to take part in the final scene. Before leaving Tanganyika he had arranged with Chief Adam Sapi and other descendants of Mkwawa to have their cephalic indices measured. Fortunately these all fell into “group seventy-one”, a comparatively rare group. But the governor was in search of a skull with other peculiarities which you may well imagine:

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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Lord Twining for providing me with the information leading up to the climax of this remarkable episode. L.G.G.

It should bear marks of having been hacked off the body with a sharp instrument.

There should be a bullet hole through the temple, coming out in front, and made by a bullet of the calibre used in German East Africa at the end of last century.

The teeth should correspond with a description given of Mkwawa's teeth by elders of the tribe – namely, upper molars intact.

Sir Edward Twining met the forensic surgeon of the Bremen police at the museum and received his expert help. Dr. Wagner, the director, took them to a large room filled with stuffed animals, birds, reptiles and skeletons, and opened cupboards containing two thousand human skulls. However, the search was narrowed by the fact that

only eighty-four of them had come from East Africa.

Before long the choice lay between two skulls, and the cephalic index enabled the police surgeon to select one of them. Perhaps this skull might have been regarded as slightly dubious but for one final point of similarity which was noticed only when the skull was examined at Iringa by the Wahehe elders who had known Mkwawa.

Mkwawa had received a blow on the forehead in battle, the bump noted by Frau von Prince. It seemed that the fracture would result in the horny growth which sometimes follows such an injury. The skull brought back by Sir Edward Twining was identified at once by the old men because of this well-remembered growth. Moreover, the skull was bleached, and there was

evidence that it had been dried on Von Prince's instructions.

"I have no doubts myself that it is the genuine skull, as it certainly has been accepted as such by the chief, his family and the whole tribe", reported Sir Edward Twining.

So now it is June 19, 1954 – fifty-six years to the day since the Germans hacked off Sultan Mkwawa's skull. The guard of honour provided by the King's African Rifles consists almost entirely of Wahehe men, and there are thirty thousand members of the tribe on the parade ground when Sir Edward Twining arrives.

In dead silence, in an atmosphere tense with drama, the governor hands a plastic casket to Chief Adam Sapi. The skull of Sultan Mkwawa has come home at last. As the governor drives

away, the Wahehe people close round their chief and move towards the mausoleum specially built for this sacred relic.

The skull is placed on a pedestal below a portrait of Sultan Mkwawa, and the chief's bodyguard take up their positions while thousands of Wahehe file reverently past the skull.

After dark the elders, those who have known Mkwawa, go into the mausoleum to speak to their old sultan. No doubt they hear what they wish to hear. After more than half a century of waiting, great prosperity and lasting peace had come to the Wahehe tribe.

## CHAPTER 11

### WAR OF THE SORCERERS

OF ALL the bloodshed that occurred in German East Africa during the few decades of German rule, the most serious war of all was the Maji-Maji rebellion. It seems to have been inspired by sorcerers, but the origin is still a mystery. More than one hundred thousand Africans perished.

Sorcerers would never have been able to foment such a sudden and widespread rising, of course, if the Germans themselves had not paved the way, almost from the day of their arrival, by a regime of cruelty. As the German anticolonial newspaper “Vossische Zeitung” remarked: Champagne for themselves, the whip of rhino hide for the blacks, were the principles of the colonial policy of these conquerors of the world”.

Dr. Karl Peters, the German imperial commissioner in East Africa, was a murderer, a man of consuming ambition who set up a reign of terror. He hanged his native servant for stealing his cigars and sent his black mistress to the gallows for being unfaithful. Fortunately word of the crimes of Peters reached Berlin and he was dismissed from the service.

General von Liebert, a governor of the colony, once declared that “it is impossible in Africa to get on without cruelty”. That was the keynote of German rule. An officer hanged his cook for spoiling the food. German photographs show brutal executions, carried out in such a way as to amount to torture. East Africa was notorious as a “flogging colony”, and the Germans were known as the “people of twenty-five” because officials awarded a

standard, minimum punishment of twenty-five lashes with the mutilating rhino whip.

Tribe after tribe rose against the Germans, but there was no mass attack until the Maji-Maji rebellion. Students of African history have found certain similarities between this disaster and the havoc caused by the “Mad Mahdi” in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan twenty years previously.

Africa is the land of the unexpected. A territory which appears to be subdued may be seething with revolt. The quiet landscape of today may become a scene of chaos tomorrow. So it was with the Maji-Maji rebellion. Perhaps the scattered German officials might have sensed the coming storm if they had not remained aloof in their forts. As it was, they were taken completely by surprise.

Maji-Maji means “water, water”. It appears that a sorcerer invented a trick in which he invited an accomplice to load a shot-gun and fire it at his chest. All the bullets were safely palmed before the gun was fired. The sorcerer had a skin bag filled with water, and as the smoke cleared the man’s chest was seen to be running with water.

A story went round the country of a great medicine man who lived in the Rufiji River in the shape of a water monster. This sorcerer could protect anyone against disease, famine and other evils; and many went to him openly. He gave them his mixture of maize seed, millet and water in bamboo tubes. And each pilgrim learnt a secret – that this medicine would also turn bullets into water.

It is not clear whether the Rufiji medicine man intended to stir up a

revolt against the Germans, or whether other sorcerers saw their opportunity and spread the tale that the rifles of the German soldiers would spurt water. No one could explain why the belief in the magic medicine became so firm and lasting. Yet it is a fact that towards the end of 1904, many thousands of natives were under the impression that the Germans would soon be driven into the sea. And not a German throughout the land suspected anything.

Month after month went by in 1905, and the whole African population of German East Africa South of the Central Railway knew that the war drums would be sounding before the year was out. German intelligence must have been at a low ebb in those days. Perhaps the Germans thought that the lesson they had taught the

Wahehe people had been a warning to the whole colony. They had recently imposed a hut tax of three rupees, and the natives appeared to be paying it meekly. Certainly there were no signs on the surface. One interesting theory which I have studied is that the Hereros, who rose so unexpectedly against the Germans in South West Africa in January 1904, sent envoys across the continent to urge the natives in German East Africa to join in the liberation movement. I doubt very much whether primitive Africans, early this century, ever carried out such a scheme.

If there were agitators in East Africa, they worked with such cunning that no record of their work remains. Count von Gotzen, governor of the period, said afterwards that the rebellion was due to a wide and simultaneous

underground movement. He offered no evidence, however, and if there was such a thing the Germans were unaware of it. Gotzen also stated that the Maji-Maji was the last fling of African paganism against the Christian culture of Germany. Other, more realistic Germans admitted that it was due to a long series of provocations on the part of the administration floggings and forced labour, and white encroachment on the land of various tribes. According to the court record, a Dar-es-Salaam magistrate imposed eighteen hundred lashes in one day. Every white employer was entitled to flog his natives without trial. Cruelty bred cruelty, and in August 1905 the pagan Africans, filled with their belief in magic, began to hit back.

As so often happens in Africa, they struck first at white people who had

done them no harm, and at some who were friends. The murder of an isolated German planter in the Kilwa district was followed by an attack on Liwale, where Bishop Spiers of the Benedictines, two lay brothers and two nuns were massacred. These missionaries were trying to pacify the mob when they were killed. Next to die were German traders and rubber planters in the district, and a police sergeant. Arab stores were burnt. Some of the rebels had guns, others used poisoned arrows.

Nyangao, a Benedictine convent near Lindi, was attacked. Father Leo and a lay brother were wounded. All at the mission expected to die, and Father Leo gave them absolution with the native rebels watching. As the priest made the sign of the Cross, the rebels, behaving in the unpredictable manner

of primitive Africans, suddenly fled from the mission. Father Leo led his party to Lindi. All reached there safely except one sister who lost touch with them on the way and was never seen again.

As a rule the rebels did not spare missionaries. A number of missions and churches were set on fire.

At first the Germans did not know whether they could rely on any tribes in the colony to help them or to remain neutral. Before long, however, it became clear that the war-scarred Wahehe were not taking part, while the Masai of the north volunteered to help the Germans.

South of the railway, the rebellion spread rapidly up and down the coast and across to Lake Tanganyika. Chiefs and witch-doctors of the powerful

Wapogoro and Wagindo tribes became prominent as leaders. Within six weeks, an area of one hundred thousand square miles was in the hands of the rebels. Down in the south the Angoni people joined in, those fierce warriors of Zulu blood. An elephant hunter named Abdulla Mpanda led a dangerous rebel contingent. Mahenge was stormed again and again by thirteen thousand rebels, who ignored the German machine-guns and inflicted heavy casualties among the garrison. The rebels captured Kilosa and massacred the defenders. Even Dar-es-Salaam was in danger. All able-bodied white people were enrolled in a defence force, and there was fighting close to the town.

By this time, of course, a good many rebels had discovered that the magic medicine was not working as the



sorcerers had promised. The sorcerers had the explanation ready. If the dead did not rise at once, they would recover after three weeks and feel stronger than before. Moreover, the sorcerers pointed out that if a man failed to say the magic words during an attack he would not be protected. So the rebels went into action as fanatics, shouting "Maji-Maji"! They carried the medicine into battle with them and sprinkled themselves during every lull in the fighting.

When the Germans realised that they could not deal with the rebellion with local forces, two cruisers were sent from Germany with a contingent of marines. The punitive force also included Zulus, Sudanese and natives from the German colonies in the Pacific, Papuans and Melanesians. I think that must have been the only

occasion when South Sea islanders were used in an African campaign.

As the German columns advanced, it became obvious that the Maji-Maji rebels had no commander-in-chief. A number of tribes had risen at the same period, but their attacks had not been planned and really amounted to a widespread series of riots by undisciplined forces.

Punitive measures began in October 1905, and there was heavy fighting all through 1906. The campaign lingered on during 1907, and not until the end of 1908 was the last of the rebel bands rounded up. German methods were harsh; far too harsh. They gave their askaris permission to loot and destroy every rebel village. Crops were set on fire. Once again the Germans organised a degrading system of rewards for rebel heads, and these were brought to

the coast for the sake of one rupee a head.

Thousands of rebels were killed in the fighting, but the real disaster came as a result of famine and disease: I gave the figure of one hundred thousand African casualties, but some authorities think the total was much higher.

Some tribes have never recovered from the aftermath of the Maji-Maji rebellion. For example, the Wagindo people of the Mahenge foothills were reduced (like the Hereros of German South West Africa) to a remnant. They live without crops or stock, hunting game and gathering wild honey.

It is said that Southern Tanganyika has not recovered to this day from the devastation ordered by the Germans. The old herds of cattle, the strong warrior tribes are things of the past.

One area which was densely populated early this century has become an elephant reserve. German reprisals wiped out the rebels – and a large part of the colony's labour force.

And still the mystery of the Maji-Maji rebellion lingers. I have studied every history of German East Africa, and found only confessions of ignorance.

How far was the magic medicine responsible for the rebellion? The chief sorcerer living at the bottom of the Rufiji River turned out on investigation to be a mythical figure. No one has ever identified as the originator of the medicine that transformed bullets into water. Those who seized upon a conjuring trick to bring the tribes into open revolt were never found.

Were the Arab slave traders behind the rebellion, as the historian Reusch

declares? Did the sorcerers combine against a government which had opposed their influence? It was found that the conspiracy had started a full twelve months before the first attack; but the oaths of secrecy were effective; the men who swore to act as blood-brothers remained silent; not a whisper of this vast movement reached a German official anywhere.

Maji-Maji ! Those were the last words that many a white settler heard in German East Africa during the ghastly months of 1905 when the rebels were going from success to success. It was a revolution, and the old people still speak of it. Maji-Maji!

To my mind there is not only an unsolved mystery, but a lesson for all white people who live in Africa. Africans know how to keep a secret. That is the lesson, and I think it is also

well to bear in mind the words of a critical and outspoken journalist, the late C. G. Grey. Here are his words:

“History is the greatest plagiarist in all literature, and repeats itself to such an extent that if one knew all history one would never make a mistake in life, because one would know of all the mistakes which can be made. However, those who would rather learn from bitter experience than from history need not read this stuff.”

## CHAPTER 12

### GRAETZ OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

AMONG THE more admirable characters of the German regime in East Africa was Oberleutnant Paul Graetz, the true motor pioneer of the Great North Road. His achievements seem to have been forgotten. How many of you know that this young officer drove a motor-car right across Africa as far back as 1909?

Graetz started from Dar-es-Salaam in August 1907. He knew the country, as he had served for several years in the native campaigns. Graetz also seems to have had unlimited money at his disposal. This supports a theory many people formed at the time that his adventure down the Great North Road into British territory was really a military intelligence exploit.



Among the more admirable characters of the German regime in East Africa was Oberleutnant Paul Graetz. This young officer drove a motor-car right across Africa as far back as 1909.

Against young Graetz was the fact that the Great North Road had still to be built. He had to follow bush paths, elephant and hippo trails. Very often he made his own bridges or rafts.

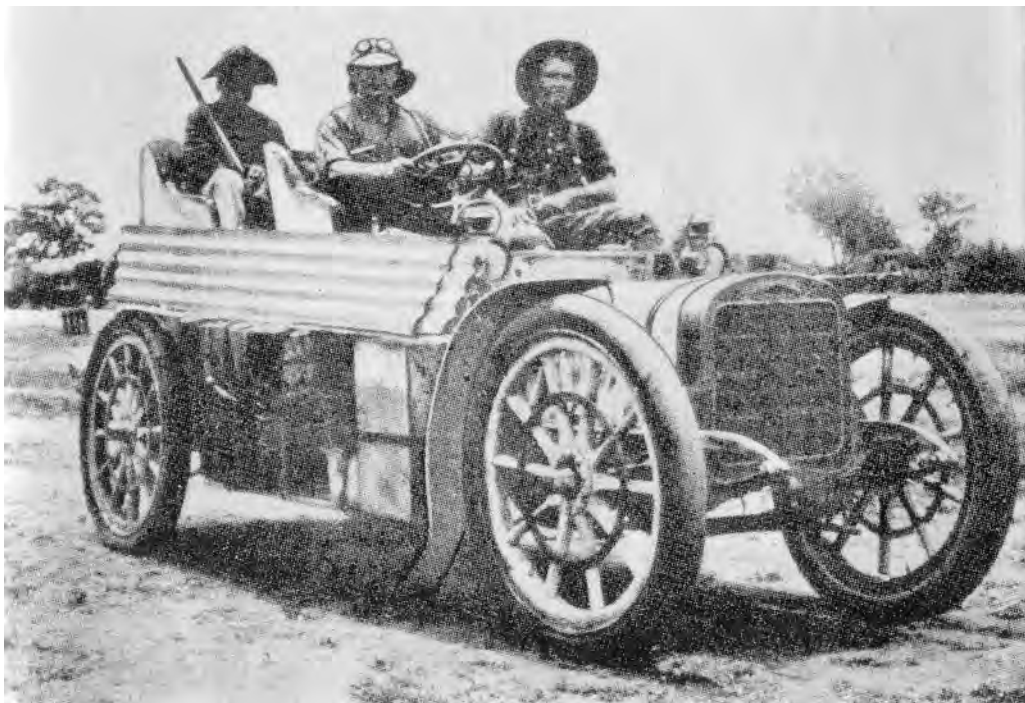
Another handicap was the car itself, by no means the finest product of German engineering. It was a four-cylinder Gaggenau of fifty-horse power, produced by a firm which did not last long. A road test of one thousand miles in Germany had proved satisfactory, but Germany is not Africa. Then the huge Gaggenau had been shipped to Dar-es-Salaam, the first motor-car ever landed there.

Photographs of the Gaggenau show that she had enormous wheels, four feet in diameter. Special tanks were fitted, giving a range of six hundred miles. Clearance was fourteen inches.

A low bottom gear ratio was provided for difficult country.

One weak point was the clumsy body, far too heavy for African conditions. Graetz made the mistake (common to almost every expedition) of trying to carry too much. He had sent fuel and tyres, oil and spares, along the route ahead of him by carriers; but the springs of the Gaggenau were flattened by the weight of guns, cameras and luxuries.

Graetz was a tall, muscular, blue-eyed man, twenty-seven years old when he started his great drive. One journalist who met him described him as a "typical officer of the Kaiser's army, with a bronzed face, an open, frank expression and an inexhaustible banking account". He spoke fairly good English.



It was a four-cylinder Gaggenu of fifty horse-power. She had enormous wheels. Special tanks gave a range of six hundred miles.

With almost every new motor-car in those early days went a professional chauffeur mechanic. The owner was seldom able to do his own repairs. Graetz had a companion named Von Roeder and a chauffeur when he left Dar-es-Salaam hopefully on that August day. He told everyone that he expected to cross Africa in six weeks. Tabora would be the first important point on his route. Then he would turn south, pass through Northern and Southern Rhodesia into the Transvaal, and finally turn west, conquer the sands of the Kalahari, enter German South West Africa, and finish the journey on the coast at Swakopmund. So he did, but it took him one year and nine months – not six weeks.

At first it looked as though the Gaggenau might run to schedule. During the first two days Graetz

passed through the coconut plantations of the coastal belt and drove by the old caravan route through the valleys of the first mountain range. The famous Mafissi ferry, mentioned in the narratives of so many old explorers, carried the car safely across the Ruvu river. Elephant and buffalo watched the snorting monster that had invaded their plains, and decided not to tackle it.

Graetz climbed the steppes, cooled his engine under the great baobabs, and took the panting juggernaut through shallow unbridged streams. On the second evening the Gaggenau thundered into Morogoro with the whole African population staring in wonder. Graetz had covered one hundred and forty miles.

Most of the cumbersome bodywork was left behind at Morogoro, and the

load was cut down to a fraction. They had too much food and drink, too many guns and cameras, for the available power. Africa teaches the traveller what can be done, and Graetz learnt his lesson quickly. Nevertheless, the time was to come when he was sorry that he could not carry more food.

They had not gone fifty miles beyond Morogoro when the chauffeur plunged the overheated car into a river where the water covered the engine. All four cylinders were cracked. The car had to be hauled by natives into the old Arab settlement of Kilosa; and there, sitting ruefully in the German fort, Graetz decided that the only thing to be done was to send the chauffeur back to Germany for a new engine!

I said that Graetz had plenty of money. The chauffeur went down with malaria

and never re-joined the expedition, but Graetz secured a new man and a new engine. They took to the caravan route again after a delay of more than three months.

Koch, the new chauffeur, turned out to be a good driver but a poor mechanic. He had brought a good supply of spare parts, however, including a front axle. They damaged the front axle severely the day after leaving Kilosa, but thanks to the spare it was unnecessary to send to Germany again.

Now the rains started. Existing bridges were seldom of any use to Graetz, as most of them were far too narrow. The only way of getting across a river was to unload the car, strip it of everything that could be unbolted, and then employ scores of natives to haul it through the water. Graetz must have paid out a small fortune in this way.



He also needed help in filling in holes, moving boulders and building causeways. Often he had to use dynamite.

Among the other hardships at this stage were water shortage, constant tyre trouble, and annoying insects. The car had left its hood at Morogoro, so they were drenched every day. The entry into each native village provided a little amusement, as the people heard the roar of the engine in the distance and expected something in the shape of a lion or elephant.

Graetz had intended to drive all the way on his own wheels. When he reached Dodoma, however, he was informed that the route to the south (the present Great North Road through Tanganyika) was under water, and that there would be no hope of getting through. Graetz decided to push on to

Kigoma and take the car by steamer down the lake. Before they reached the lake the Gaggenau was wrecked for the second time. A hidden tree-stump was responsible on this occasion, and it twisted the crank-shaft, sheared the flywheel bolts and split the clutch-plate. Once again the car had to be hauled by man-power to the nearest white settlement. Somehow the mechanism was patched up, and the Kigoma workshops completed the job. Here the expedition might have come to an end, however, for the captain of the tiny German lake steamer was doubtful whether it would be safe to carry a motor-car weighing two and a half tons on the deck of his ship. Graetz persuaded him to take the risk. Early in 1908 the Gaggenau party voyaged down the lake to

Bismarckburg (now Kasanga) and unloaded the battered car.

It took them almost a month to cross the frontier into Northern Rhodesia and reach Abercorn. Koch the chauffeur grew tired of extricating the car from swamps and returned thankfully to Germany. In this remote part of the colony, however, Graetz met a former German Navy engineer named Kuehne, and engaged him. Kuehne was a steam engineer, of course, but he was resourceful and soon learnt how to keep the Gaggenau going. He could not drive and feared speed; but this peculiarity did not become apparent for a long time, as the car was crawling rather than racing. Graetz followed the present route of the Great North Road through Northern Rhodesia at a time when it was no more than a bush track. He was not

only the motor-car pioneer of the road. He actually built sections of the road so that his car could pass over it; a German military officer paying for a road in British territory! Often the settlers helped him to cut his way through the bush and bridge the small streams. But there is no doubt that Graetz often reached into his box of golden sovereigns.

Kasama gave them a short rest at the end of March, and they ate some good meals. Graetz and his two companions had been eating cranes and frogs in the bush, for game was scarce and even guinea-fowl were regarded as a luxury.

Petrol dumps awaited the Gaggenau at regular intervals, but there were times when the car needed fuel long before the next dump had been reached. Once the expedition had to wait five weeks

for the awkward fifty-gallon drums of petrol, and there was another delay of four weeks. Only a most determined man would have carried on in the face of these setbacks. Some unknown force was driving Graetz. Was it military discipline?

Between Kasama and Mpika runs the broad Chambesi River, too deep for a car to be hauled through, too wide for Graetz to build a bridge. The indomitable Graetz constructed a huge raft with hundreds of bundles of reeds and pulled the raft and car over the river. Once the tow-rope broke and a number of natives fell into the river. They clambered on to the raft just before the crocodiles arrived.

Graetz was in Fort Jameson towards the end of April, and there the people assured him that it would be impossible to drive on to Broken Hill. (The

present route, of course, cuts out the deviation to Fort Jameson which Graetz made.) Graetz listened attentively, but pushed on with a large team of natives to help the Gaggenau through the bush. He made Broken Hill early in July.

Kuehne worked hard on the car at Broken Hill, aided by the railway mechanics. The huge wheels were disintegrating, for the timber in them was not standing up to changes in temperature. Kuehne designed new rear wheels with rings of steel and enormous spokes shaped like the blades of a fan.

They followed the railway track southwards to Livingstone, repairing hundreds of punctures on the way. It seems that the wooden rims of the front wheels had become so rotten that the spoke screws forced their way into

the tubes. In the comfort of Livingstone the Germans built new front wheels, made a new body with high seats but without doors, and installed new petrol tanks behind the rear seat.

Graetz had driven the car ever since it had been put on shore at Bismarckburg from the lake steamer. Here and there in Northern Rhodesia there were hard stretches where Graetz was able to open out the Gaggenau to something approaching her top speed. Nothing sensational, of course, but thirty-five or forty seemed fast after crawling through the bush. At all events Graetz frightened the wits out of his engineer. Kuehne resigned and found his way back to East Africa.

The trek from Livingstone to Bulawayo was a nightmare stretch for Cape to Cairo motorists before World War I. It remained almost impassable for

some years after that war, until the all-weather road was built. The ill-fated Captain Kelsey, in 1913, took six weeks to cover the seventy-five miles between Wankie and Livingstone. Eleven years later the Court-Treath expedition spent four months digging their car out of the mud between Bulawayo and Livingstone. Graetz, in October 1908, drove through to Wankie and Bulawayo with far less mechanical trouble than he had encountered farther north. Once a bush fire burnt the tyres off his wheels, but failed to catch the petrol tanks. Wankie colliery, with its fine workshops, gave him a chance of tuning up his strained engine.

After leaving Wankie one of Graetz's natives wandered off into the bush to find water. It was intensely hot, and the native seemed to have gone mad,

for Graetz searched for hours without finding him. Even this tough German confessed that he lay down “worn out and indifferent”.

By this time Graetz had a new companion, a British mechanic named Henry Gould, certainly a great asset to the expedition. Gould, who was half-dead from thirst himself, discovered a stagnant pool used by monkeys. They drank this water, staggered on and found the missing native twenty miles from where they had left the car.

Graetz drove the car along the railway line near Gwaai, by arrangement with the railway officials. There was no danger of meeting a train, but they almost collided with a large herd of elephants. Graetz had no licence to shoot elephants, so he reversed the car along the track and waited until the herd passed on.

The weather clearly favoured the Gaggenau, for heat was better than rain. Graetz left Bulawayo at the end of November, conquered the sand, and drove into Palapye Road on the Kalahari fringe five days later. But here he was warned that it was raining in the desert and that it would be hopeless to proceed by car until the dry weather came.

Graetz, a splendid organiser, engaged a resourceful transport rider named Bailey to go ahead by ox-wagon and establish petrol dumps. Then the restless Graetz turned eastwards, aiming at reaching Johannesburg in time for Christmas. He arrived by the Main Reef Road on December 11, and was met at Roodepoort by twenty motor-cars owned by members of the Transvaal Automobile Club. By this time he had been on the road for

sixteen months, though he had been on the move for only six months. The Gaggenau had covered nearly four thousand miles. Von Roeder felt at this stage that he had seen enough of Africa and said farewell to Graetz, his friend of many ordeals.

Johannesburg newspapers reported that the car was a "huge contrivance once painted white, but suffering from ravages of time and weather. The wheels wobbled and the engine coughed". Graetz and Gould wore white helmets, khaki shirts, riding breeches and leggings. Among those who met them was a Mr. Holloway, who had watched the car leave Dar-es-Salaam.

Graetz had a little trouble with the police, as his car bore no number-plate. However, he was forgiven. Mr. Shillito, president of the Transvaal

Automobile Club, welcomed Graetz at a banquet and declared that no Johannesburg motorist could have done what Graetz had done. "His arrival here reminded me of the coming of the first railway locomotive", Mr. Shillito declared. "We were all excited and went to see the first train come in. No one will arouse so much excitement again until the first aeroplane arrives."

Another speaker saw fit to challenge Mr. Shillito's prophecy. "No one will cross the Dark Continent in an aeroplane in our lifetime", he asserted. "The petrol tanks are too small, and aeroplanes cannot carry much luggage. And what is the use of travelling without luggage, especially if you have ladies on board?"

Graetz, in reply, said that in his opinion the automobile was fighting

its way forward as the best means of transport. “In Germany my feat was looked upon as a desperate, impossible affair”, he recalled. “Nevertheless, love of sport keeps us young. I had to make six hundred miles of roads, but I am here.”

Graetz and Gould faced the sands of the Kalahari boldly in January and charged the dunes and drifts with more or less success. When the differential broke they fitted a spare. When they failed to locate a petrol dump they seized six oxen belonging to an unwilling Batawana, and towed the car to Lake Ngami. There was no water in the “lake” and both men suffered from thirst before they were able to find water.

One of the Afrikaner settlers in the Ghanzi area befriended the hard-pressed motorists and gave them the

finest meal they had tasted for weeks – bread, butter and milk. It was on March 13 that Graetz crossed the frontier into German South West Africa and met a German cavalry patrol from Rietfontein North.

So here was another German colony to cross. Although the rivers were in flood, Graetz found the journey much easier than his struggle in East and Central Africa. On May 1, 1909 the Gaggenau entered Swakopmund and halted beside the cold South Atlantic. The journey of five thousand six hundred miles had ended. Graetz took the weary Gaggenau back to Germany with him, a car that its own makers must have had difficulty in recognising.

You might think that Paul Graetz has seen enough of the Great North Road,

enough of Africa. Yet early in 1911 it was announced that the first man to cross Africa by road now intended to travel as far as possible across the African continent from the Indian Ocean to the South Atlantic by motor-boat.

Graetz's craft was named *Sarotti*, after the man who paid for this venture. She was a handsome twenty-five footer, with a special carriage for road transport. As usual in Graetz's enterprises, no money was spared. The boat was built in five sections, so that it could be carried by porters. It was driven by a Swedish one-cylinder engine running on paraffin.

I have seen Graetz's own map of his route. The *Sarotti* was off-loaded at Chinde and travelled up the Zambesi. He took to the land in Nyasaland, of course, passed through Blantyre, and

launched his craft again on Lake Nyasa. Then he landed at Karonga in the north, crossed the great African watershed to the River Fife, which flows towards the west. When the tyres supporting the *Sarotti* became worn out during the overland journey, Graetz made new tyres of hippo hide.

In due course Graetz gained the Chambesi River (which he had crossed on a raft with the Gaggenau) and traversed the Bangweulu swamps. The Luapula River carried him to Lake Mweru, and from there he reached another stretch of the Luapula. Ahead lay the mighty Congo itself. Thus with a number of short and long portrages he was able to cross Africa by water.

It sounds easy. In fact, Graetz's voyage across Africa was almost as difficult as his road journey, and his



achievement was shadowed by tragedy.

Graetz started up the *Zambesi* in April 1911 with a French cinematographer named Octave Fiere, an African cook James and four other natives. All went well on the river. While the *Sarotti* was being transported to Blantyre on a railway truck she was set on fire by sparks from the wood burning engine. Graetz was able to repair the damage.

It was in September, on the Chambesi near Chilungulu Mountain, that the tragedy occurred. Up to this moment they had encountered nothing more dangerous than hippos which had bumped against the boat, and uncharted snags which had failed to sink her. Now the two white men were just sitting down to breakfast on the river bank when three buffalo appeared. "They were of such unusual

size that they seemed to be prehistoric animals", Graetz said.

Graetz picked up his rifle and fired. One buffalo was wounded. All three went off into the bush. Graetz hurried after them with his rifle, Fiere with his cine-camera. The blood spoor was plain enough, and they followed it for six hours. Meanwhile the natives rowed the *Sarotti* along the river to the point where Graetz had approached the buffalo. He was trying to finish the wounded buffalo when it charged Octave Fiere, and tossed him.

Then the buffalo turned on Graetz, who tripped and fell into a depression. The buffalo mauled him, broke a few unimportant bones and pierced his right cheek with its horn. Apparently the buffalo was unable to cause any further injuries. It departed, leaving Graetz unconscious.

Paul Graetz, one of the toughest of all African adventurers, soon came to his senses. He called for his medicine chest, sewed up his own face, and bandaged his fractured lower jaw. Fiere was dying, but Graetz did his best to save him. He gave morphia and sewed up a huge wound in his side. Fiere died before dawn next day.

Graetz then sent a runner to Kasama for help. Mr. Percy Cookson, the magistrate, hastened to the scene with Dr. G. F. Randall, the district surgeon. Dr. Randall had to operate on Graetz, who was in pain. Then the party set out for Kasama with Graetz on a stretcher. Fiere's body was carried to the mission of the White Fathers at Kasama and buried there.

Knowing Graetz by this time, you will realise that the disaster did not end the expedition. Weeks later the scarred

Graetz returned to his boat and pushed on down the unexplored Chambesi towards Bangweulu. He was determined to investigate the mysterious swamps. During his car journey the Awemba tribesmen had told him of huge elephants, enormous giraffes and other monsters round about Bangweulu; and Graetz hoped to discover some new species of animal in that labyrinth of waterways.

Though he found no living specimen himself, Graetz made this interesting entry in his diary:

“The crocodile is found only in very isolated specimens in Lake Bangweulu, except in the mouths of the large rivers at the north. In the swamp lives the *nsanga*, much feared by the natives, a degenerate saurian which one might well confuse with the crocodile were it not that its skin has

no scales and its toes are armed with claws. I did not succeed in shooting a *nsanga*, but on the island of Mbawala I came by some strips of its skin.”

Graetz spent three months in the Bangweulu region. He carried a supply of artificial eyes, which enabled him to pose as a magician. Many a one-eyed African received a new eye from Graetz.

Hughes the trader met Graetz on the lake. He recalled that Graetz had mapped the whole of his route with great precision. Every side-stream was shown. Graetz gave Hughes a copy of this map, and some of his artificial eyes. Hughes, in return, warned Graetz that he would be running into danger if he attempted to shoot a certain cataract on the Luapula River. This was the spot where the French explorer Giraud had come to grief about thirty years

previously. Five hundred hostile Baushi natives sniped at him with arrows while he was shooting the rapids, and Giraud had to surrender his steel boat to the chief.

Graetz was a sick man at this time. He must have been completely worn out when he gave up his expedition for the time being and returned to Europe for treatment. He left the *Sarotti* in charge of a native chief near the rapids Hughes had mentioned; and somehow, in Graetz's absence, the chief managed to wreck the boat.

Once again you will not be surprised to hear that Graetz returned to Africa with a new motor-boat to complete the task he had set himself. This time he shipped his boat, the *Hygiama*, to the Congo mouth, and in June 1912 he was moving up the river to Matadi. This time, of course, he travelled from

west to east; but when he reached the Luapula rapids he claimed to have crossed Africa by water, apart from stretches where there was no navigable water.

It was a fairly quick trip compared with other journeys Graetz had made. The *Hygiama* was a mahogany boat with a six-horse power paraffin motor. He was back on the Luapula in December 1912, searching for relics of the *Sarotti*. Then, his voyage over, he took the train to Cape Town.

Paul Graetz came into the news once more before World War I, when he announced that he was planning an Anglo-German airship expedition across New Guinea. Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer, was interested in this scheme, but it was abandoned on the outbreak of war.

I do not know where this resolute character served his country in the two world wars, but he survived both of them. In 1950 the old adventurer was reported to be planning another journey across Africa at the age of seventy. I hope that he succeeded in revisiting the far places which he had loved in the days when the heart of Africa was a long way from civilization.

Back to the Great North Road now, the road that many a baby car has conquered without breaking a spring.

It was a long time after Graetz's journey before ordinary motorists came to look upon the Great North Road as an ordinary route. Years ago I was travelling by sea to Ceylon when I met the woman who had taken part in the very first successful Cape to Cairo

expedition. She was Mrs Stella Court-Treath, and she described to me the slow journey in 1924 which I have already mentioned.

“Four months to do less than four hundred miles – it almost broke our hearts”, said Mrs Court-Treath. “Roads became rivers. Wire netting was useless. We were constantly chopping down trees in our path. I remember the weird country between Broken Hill and Abercorn, the mud and the rotten bridges, the holes and the tree-stumps.”

Only a few years later this nightmare track had become a recognised road. Motor services were organised in February 1927 to connect Broken Hill with Abercorn. Major Dunn was in charge. He used Dodge trucks and charged eight pounds sterling a ton for

freight. White passengers, a shilling a mile.

I believe the first ordinary car (apart from the Court-Treath special expedition vans) to get through to Nairobi from the Cape was an American touring car of mass-produced type. A photograph which I have before me is so dim that I cannot identify the make, but it looks like a Ford Model T. This was owned by Fred Coyne, a concert party manager and comedian. The car, stripped of its touring body and piled with mattresses, carried a Scottish driver and the six members of the “Joy Belles” company with their simple theatrical properties. They also found room for drums of petrol, boxes of provisions and a tent.

The “Joy Belles” had been touring the towns of the Cape and the karoo villages for two years when it occurred

to Fred Coyne that he might find larger audiences in the north. So he took the company to Bulawayo in 1926; and on July 27 he left Broken Hill for Kenya. Everywhere along the route he was assured that he was making a pioneer car journey.

The “Joy Belles” were delayed near Chitambo Mission by a buckled wheel. They met a great-grandson of David Livingstone there, and sang for the missionaries. Spare wheels arrived from Serenje, and the heavily-loaded car drove on to Mpika and Kasama. As there were thirty white people at Kasama they gave a show on a farm which had a large dining-room. The farmer served drinks all round. As there was no piano in all Kasama they used a tinkling dulcitone instead.

When the party drove into Tanganyika they were told that they would not see

any other motor traffic for hundreds of miles. Nevertheless, they met one southbound car with two Kenya settlers on board; and they exchanged valuable information.

Only when they made a side-trip to pleasant Tukuyu in the green hills did the “Joy Belles” give another performance. They used the court-room of the old German boma as theatre, having borrowed a harmonium from a missionary.

Back on the faint new outline of the Great North Road, the party crossed the Bahati plains and broke down hopelessly on the way to Iringa. They were towed in, and the car was repaired at the garage while the “Joy Belles” gave two shows in the town.

At Dodoma they saw their first railway train since leaving Broken

Hill, twelve hundred miles to the south. They played at Tanga, Mombasa, Moshi, Arusha and other places and said farewell to the battered car in Nairobi. No one disputed their claim to have made the first car journey from the Cape to Kenya.

It was a conference of East African governors (shortly before the “Joy Belles” set out) that approved the building of the modern Great North Road that now stretches for six thousand miles from Cape Town to Juba. But in the late nineteen-twenties, the motorist on that long road felt almost as lonely as the indomitable Oberleutnant Paul Graetz.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE ROAD PAST KILIMANJARO

Now I am on the great north road again myself, the main highway through Africa, after all my side-trips and digressions and backward glances down the corridors of time.

This is the 'bus that runs from Dodoma to Arusha along the road dominated by Kilimanjaro. Not the smart government 'bus, which I missed, but a 'bus owned by Africans or Indians, devoid of all luxury. It has a first-class section which I share with a young Indian couple and their baby, and the frightening bunch of fish which someone gave them on departure. There is also an elderly Indian who winds his turban round his face and goes to sleep. It is not the smell of the fish that disturbs him, but the dust. This is not first-class travel as I know

it, and it will not do my cough any good. Yet it is better than being in the back with the picturesque tribesmen who join us from time to time – including Masai warriors armed with bows and arrows.

Ah well, I am an old traveller, and I am looking forward to meeting old friends in Nairobi. When you are uncomfortable and far from home, the remedy is to lose yourself in your surroundings. Along this road are the Wagogo, a Bantu people under Masai influence with golliwog hair, decorated with red-ochre, growing their pumpkins, threshing their millet, tending their cattle. Perhaps the birds will interest you more. This is the land of the dwarf parrots which eat the grain of the Wagogo; dumpy little parrots with yellow collars, nesting in



roofs, and seen from the Great North Road at times in flocks of hundreds.

Some of this country is desert, some is an ocean of bush, and the rivers remind you of South Africa, for they are filled with dust. Another reminder of home is the signpost marked Pienaar's Heights, named after the Afrikaner who trekked to German East Africa long ago; a man with a famous son, "Sangiro", who told me a story that I will tell you later.

I shall remember the weird Great Rift Valley as I saw it from this road along the escarpment, the panorama of that immense north to south wall, blue in the distance. A rift with volcanic cones and craters on its floor, and dazzling lakes, and forests that seem like mere patches of grass. But always the human picture is more memorable. Today it is the Masai at the roadside;

the proud, lean, chocolate men with straight noses, drinkers of blood and milk; the women with huge, circular earrings, limbs heavy with copper wire. I have seen more pleasing Africans than the Masai, but none more impressive. A Masai leaning on his spear is the personification of Old Africa.

Kondoa Irangi is our first proper halt, an attractive Arab village of white houses and mango trees and a water furrow in the main street. This was a great oasis for the slave caravans toiling down to the coast along the cruel, dry route from Lake Victoria.

I saw the Arab and Indian quarter, the poor little market with its little heaps of grain, sweet potatoes and small eggs. Then I strolled round the old German boma, where buildings put up early this century still house the police

and other officials. When the invaders advanced on Kondoa in 1916, the Germans set their model up-country station on fire. However, the buildings were repaired and some of the German colonial atmosphere remains.

Round about Kondoa Irangi are caves and shelters with rock paintings so old that no one can identify the artists. Perhaps they were Bushmen on their long trek down Africa. Certainly the bow-and-arrow hunters and the antelope are drawn in the style found on the rocks of Spain and in the caves of South Africa.

On through the Masai steppe until giraffe on the road, coffee estates, flame trees and the perfect cone of Mount Meru announce that Arusha is at hand. Here I can say farewell to the aroma of fish, and the 'bus that has shaken up my cough so roughly. At

Arusha I step thankfully into a first class hotel.

Someone who knew Arusha in the German days described it to me as a Bavarian village with the authentic Bavarian mountain back-ground. Arusha has grown so much since then that you have to search for German relics. You will find them in the shape of yet another old boma which has lost its German eagles but retains its Teutonic tower.

Arusha is a cosmopolitan little place, with a number of white races among the planters – not only British and Greeks and Germans, but Afrikaners and Russians from the Caucasus. It is a town of roses. The white quarter is linked with the Indian bazaar by a bridge over a pretty stream.

On the road, Kilimanjaro is the great spectacle. Here in Arusha the fifteen thousand feet of Mount Meru cannot be ignored, for the old volcano seems to rise straight out of the main street.

Just outside my hotel is the famous board proclaiming Arusha as the half-way house between Cape Town and Cairo. The hotel conveys an illusion of the English countryside; I have a room and bath and balcony overlooking a garden that might be in Surrey. According to legend, there was once an African cook at this hotel who was trained at the Adlon in Berlin. Perhaps his influence lingers. The dinner certainly did my cough good.

When you leave Arusha, the Great North Road is the road to the Kenya border. More coffee, more grass steppes of the Masai cattle-herders, more thorn bush, and all the game

animals in the world. Namanga, the rest-camp in a game reserve, is over the border in Kenya. They call it a rest-camp, but it is really a sophisticated hotel where even the American tourists are unable to grumble. I understand that they are especially pleased when the elephants come into the garden and uproot the plants.

Such is the road past Kilimanjaro. Now the mountain demands our reverent gaze – this giant which I have seen before, but only from the air.

It occurs to me that though I have gazed upon many of Africa's famous peaks and mountains, I have climbed nothing higher than Table Mountain. Once I loved that mountain beneath which I live; but man has spoilt the superb outline for me by placing a vulgar cableway station on one corner, like a pisspot on a cathedral. The

savages who dwell on Kilimanjaro, the Wachagga people, have made no such blunder, and you can pass by without seeing an advertisement for the good coffee they grow.

I say that Kilimanjaro is the greatest spectacle along the whole Great North Road, not only because it is Africa's highest mountain, but because of its own beauty and its legends. Mountaineers will disagree with me, I know. They prefer Mount Kenya, the second-highest, and others which are hard to climb. Kilimanjaro, they say, is a tripper's mountain.

When the first white men set eyes on Kilimanjaro, either words failed them or they failed to realise the full grandeur of the mountain. Search the narratives of the explorers and pioneers, and you will find little reflection of the wonder of Kilimanjaro. Perhaps

the medical missionary, Sir Albert Cook, was an exception. He wrote of a "wonderful sight in the towering clouds", and he was impressed by the snow and ice crowning the summit. "Cut off below and above by clouds, it seemed to float in mid-air, exquisitely sharp cut and defined", wrote Cook.

I suppose there is no way now of proving or disproving the legend that Kilimanjaro was Queen Victoria's birthday present to her nephew Kaiser Wilhelm II. It is significant that the Kenya-Tanganyika frontier runs arrow-straight save where it reaches the great mountain; and there Tanganyika circles the giant in a firm embrace. Some highly-placed German must have asked for it when the boundary was being surveyed. What a gift it was!

Discoverers of great mountains are invariably content to stare up into the clouds and report a virgin peak, unclimbed and unclimbable. That was the attitude when the German missionary Rebmann sighted a dazzling whiteness, not a cloud as he thought but the incredible snow cap within three degrees of the equator. The mountain had to wait from that day in 1848 until 1889 for Dr. Hans Meyer, the naturalist, to set foot on the summit.

It is possible that ancient Egypt knew of Kilimanjaro, and the old Arab geographers placed it on their maps. White visitors to the East African coast heard of the giant years before Rebmann's discovery. Few people, however, were prepared to believe the missionary's story of a snow peak so close to the equator. Yet the native

names suggested the snow. Kilima Njaro, in Swahili, means the "shining mountain", and the Masai speak of Oldonyo Oi Boi, the "white mountain". Other native names describe it as Ngaje Nga, the "House of God"; or the "Great Wonder"; or the "Magic Mountain".

German pioneers left many German names on the mountain. Bismarck's Hill at thirteen thousand feet, for example, and Kaiser Wilhelm's Spitz, the highest point of the African continent. Hans Meyer had a cave named after him. Reusch Crater is a tribute to the greatest Kilimanjaro climber of all, Dr. Reusch, a Don Cossack who became a missionary.

Kilimanjaro is not one peak, but a collection of domes and peaks. Kibo (19,340 feet) is the volcanic crater; this is the highest point, but a test of

endurance rather than a mountaineering feat. Then there is Mawenzi (nearly 17,000 feet at Hans Meyer Spitz); a jagged rock peak which only the experienced climber can hope to conquer. To the west is the little-known Shira plateau with several peaks over 13,000 feet in height.

Dr. Reusch is one of the small group of Mawenzi climbers, and he has reached the Kibo summit more than fifty times. No man knows the whole mountain so well as this former Russian officer. Kibo has been made to look slightly ridiculous by such climbers as the Spanish youth who went up alone between the wars wearing a bush shirt and shorts, without a blanket, carrying his bread, sardines and chocolate. He returned with all the records of previous

climbs; not a good example to set, but clear proof of a queer achievement.

Mrs Hamilton Ross, a Kenya woman, climbed Kibo at the age of seventy before World War II. Her only complaint was that it was a bit cold on top. Four schoolboys from South Africa also completed the climb not long ago, taking five days altogether. They suffered from mountain sickness. But the most remarkable feat of all, and one which seemed to reduce the stature of Kibo, was carried out in March 1959 by two East African mountaineers, Lucas Nasari and Anton Helson. Kilimanjaro rises abruptly from the Athi plains. These two men started from the main road and rushed to the rim of Kibo crater in the record time of eleven and a half hours. Six hours later they were back on the road. Never before had anyone done the

climb and descent within one day. The men wore shorts, singlets and rubber shoes, keeping out the cold by running. Their feat proved that an expert rescue party could reach the summit within twelve hours in an emergency.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of these remarkable antics, Kilimanjaro should be treated with respect. I met a mountaineer in Nairobi who assured me that the giant had a sinister influence over many climbers. It was not so easy as it looked, and nine people out of ten failed to reach the summit. Often the muscular climber would give up, while the frail girl would reach the crater.

My informant told me he felt no sense of triumph while standing on Kibo peak. He was exhausted and sleepy. He thought the descent was far more arduous than the upward journey, for he could not control his feet. Some climbers returned from Kilimanjaro without apparent physical symptoms. Soon afterwards they had died. He had also known an African guide who had committed suicide as a direct result of the malevolent influence of the mountain.

Most climbers need guides, as there are deadly glaciers and crevasses along the route. Oxygen starvation causes alarming mental effects, and one climber would have thrown himself over a precipice if his guide had not saved him. Snow blindness is a hazard. A guide rescued a member of a French film expedition from the

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<sup>4</sup> Two one-legged Austrians using crutches climbed Kilimanjaro in February, 1961.

Kibo crater, where he had staggered in delirium.

Hotels in the area organise Kilimanjaro climbs efficiently, and nothing is forgotten. Guides cook admirable meals in the rest huts. You can hire everything from bedding to snow goggles, and porters to carry the equipment. Even sleeping pills are provided, for the atmosphere on the summit is in some way opposed to the natural sleep of exhaustion.

Kilimanjaro has been a temptation to airmen ever since the first aircraft reached Tanganyika, but I have yet to hear of one who met disaster on the mountain. A pilot named McAdam had a narrow escape, however, towards the end of 1939.

McAdam was flying a twin-engined, low-powered aircraft when he was

seized with an irresistible urge to photograph the Kibo crater. Steadily within an hour, he climbed to eighteen thousand feet. Then he approached from the north in a spiral ascent, taking another half an hour to reach twenty thousand. If the vultures had not been using an up draught that day, McAdam might not have made it. He followed the vultures, but found that he still needed another thousand feet to clear the top in perfect safety. This proved to be impossible; he could gain no more than two hundred feet. Risking the treacherous air currents, he swung over Kibo and looked into the black rings of lava in the snow-bound saucer of the crater. Then he took his photograph and gazed spellbound at the scene which many have looked back upon as one of the great moments of their lives.



If only McAdam had been satisfied with his achievement he would have saved himself a close approach to death. However, he decided to take one more photograph. He was breathless owing to the altitude, and he should have gone down. He returned to the crater instead and found the aircraft heading straight for the summit. A less experienced pilot might have pulled the nose up sharply and stalled. McAdam turned gently with all the power he could call upon, put the nose down and moved away from the threatening mountain.

Apparently he had disturbed the air over the crater during his first crossing, and had run back into this turbulent area on the return. This had brought the aircraft near the stalling point, as the slipstream from his twin engines had not yet settled down.

McAdam was a commercial pilot with long experience of African conditions. He saved himself by his own skill, after Kilimanjaro had added something to his knowledge of the air. Twenty minutes later he landed at Moshi, thankful to feel his wheels on the ground again.

Dr. Reusch, the Russian missionary I have mentioned, is not only a great Kilimanjaro climber but also a tireless investigator of the mountain's legends. When he settled in the Moshi district after World War I, natives asked him repeatedly why so many white people climbed the mountain. "Are they trying to find the treasure?" was the usual question.

Reusch then found in his congregation a number of Abyssinians who had been recruited by the Germans to serve as askaris, and had remained in

the country. These men knew the origin of the treasure legend.

It goes back to the days of Menelik I, first king of Abyssinia, and son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The story of Sheba's visit to Solomon's court is told in the Old Testament. The legend describes the conquest of East Africa as far as the Rufiji River by Menelik I in his old age. On the slopes of Kilimanjaro the victorious army halted. Menelik's slaves were loaded with the spoils of war, gold and jewels and ivory. At this stage Menelik thought his time had come. "A king I am, and as a king I wish to die", he declared; and he ordered his slaves to carry him up the mountain. Menelik died far above the snow line, and they buried him with all his treasure in a cave. To this day the Abyssinians believe that their first

king lies on Kibo – some say within the crater and that his frozen body will be found marvellously preserved with Solomon's signet ring on his finger.

Abyssinian priests have predicted that the discovery will be made by an Ethiopian emperor who will conquer East Africa as Menelik did, and put on the ring. From that moment he will be endowed with the wisdom of Solomon.

Reusch climbed Kibo for the first time in September 1926, and when he returned the Abyssinians asked him whether he had seen Menelik and the jewels. He told them he had found nothing. "Then you have not been to the cave on the summit", they declared.

This legend that has been kept alive for so many centuries seemed to the

Abyssinians to be coming true in 1896, when King Menelik II defeated the Italians. Now they have placed their faith in another descendant of the royal house.

Reusch thinks that there may be a grain of truth in the legend. Cosmas, the merchant and traveller of Alexandria, visited Abyssinia during the sixth century. He became a monk and wrote in seclusion twelve books in Greek called "Topographia". In one he described a marble seat which had been engraved with an account of a king who had made many expeditions to the south. This king had brought back slaves and loot from the "land of Zingion", which has been identified as the modern Kenya and Tanganyika. Apparently the memory of those conquests is preserved in the Kilimanjaro legend, albeit in a garbled form.

Mr. P. J. Sinclair, a coffee planter of Marangu in the Moshi district, met two Abyssinians on the mountain in 1926 and asked them what they were doing so far from home. They related another version of the treasure legend. Menelik had left his treasure in the cave, they said, and had then returned to Abyssinia. One of the Abyssinians climbed the mountain, but came back to Mr. Sinclair without the treasure.

Kilimanjaro seems to have a fascination for animals as well as for some men. Ernest Hemingway's leopard, at eighteen thousand feet, was torn to fragments by souvenir hunters long ago; but live leopards have been heard at thirteen thousand. Julian Huxley formed a theory that many animals climb as high as they can when they are dying. Kilimanjaro supports the idea.

In a cave on Kibo at fifteen thousand feet the frozen remains of a Colobus monkey were found. Normally this species lives in the forest belt up to ten thousand feet. Bones of some mammals have been found near the Kibo summit.

Wild dogs and civet cats have reached eighteen thousand feet, while a serval cat was seen at thirteen thousand. A little grass mouse was trapped at the Mawenzi hut, fifteen thousand feet.

Reedbuck have been seen near the Kibo summit, while eland love the heights and have certainly reached sixteen thousand feet. Fourteen thousand appears to be the buffalo limit, though the discovery of buffalo horns near the Kibo crater suggests a higher range. Elephant have been seen well above eight thousand feet, while remains have been identified at

thirteen thousand. The spoor of a bush pig was noted at ten thousand. Lizards have been caught at thirteen thousand, while butterflies are seen at twelve thousand. The sloughed skin of a snake has also been found at twelve thousand feet.

Kilimanjaro could hardly escape reports of an African version of the “abominable snowman” and other mystery animals. Footprints of a two-legged creature unknown to zoologists are said to have been seen near Kibo crater. No photographs were taken. Climbers have also mentioned an unidentified animal frozen in a glacier at eighteen thousand feet – preserved for centuries like the prehistoric mammoths found in Siberia.

The great riddle of Kilimanjaro, of course, is the gradual melting of the

ice-crowned dome of Kibo. Is the volcano dead or only dormant?

Dr. Meyer, after his pioneer climb seventy years ago, reported that he could find no trace of fumaroles, the typical crevices in the cone of active volcanoes through which vapour issues. However, he thought there must be some warmth keeping large masses of snow from filling up the crater. Meyer made four expeditions to Kilimanjaro, the last in 1898, and his clear photographs of snow and glaciers are available for comparison with recent air views.

Meyer's pictures reveal broad glaciers on Kibo, with rounded snouts. They descended from an ice-cap fully half as high as the central cone itself.

Since then the ice-cap has receded, and bare rock can be seen between the

glaciers. Dr. George Salt, the Cambridge scientist, visited Kilimanjaro in 1948 and reported: "If the ice-cap and glaciers continue to recede during the next fifty years at the same rate as they have done since Meyer's visit, little ice, if any, will be left on the western side of the mountain by the end of this century. Whatever might be the effect on climate and rainfall and crops, there can be no doubt that the disappearance of that gleaming dome would be a grievous aesthetic loss."

Either the earth below the Kibo glaciers is becoming warmer or the climate of Africa is changing. Fumaroles and other signs of increased volcanic activity have been noted on Kibo. Is Kilimanjaro working up towards a volcanic blow? Well, it may be only a tripper's paradise, but it is still Africa's giant and I wish that I

had the physique to leave my name in the Kibo visitors' book. Here indeed is the poor man's Everest. One climber described the climb as "walking out of tropical Africa, into the far north of Scotland, and thence into Switzerland".

You leave the carnations of the Kibo Hotel at Nloshi with your porters and bedding, food and lamps, and take the mountain road over the main eastern spur. Through the banana and coffee plantations of Marangu, into a fairyland of ferns and creepers. Gladioli and violets grow wild here.

Nine thousand feet, and you are glad to rest in the first hut. Next day the forest belt is left behind and you march through grassland and Alpine flowers and heather.

Twelve thousand five hundred feet, and from Peter's Hut you watch the clouds floating below you. Say farewell to vegetation at fourteen thousand and prepare for the ordeal of the snow. Hans Weyer Cave will give you shelter of a sort. Now for the final assault. Some find their hearts beating so wildly that they cannot go on. Some finish on hands and knees, to see all Africa below them.

## CHAPTER 14

### TANGANYIKA MAGIC

WHILE I am still within sight of Tanganyika and its “magic mountain” there is one more aspect of life in the territory which calls for discussion. That is magic.

Tanganyika seems to have its full share of sorcerers, witchdoctors and others of the black magic fraternity. You have seen how the sorcerers brought about a revolution which almost ruined the southern part of the colony during the German days. Smaller tragedies which can be traced directly to witchcraft still occur.

I was reading last year of a young South African geologist who was murdered by tribesmen only twelve miles from Dodoma. It was not through race hatred, for relations

between white and black are probably better in Tanganyika than in any other African territory. This was a *mumiami* killing.

A police officer explained *mumiami* to me when I first visited Tanganyika forty years ago. It was more common in those days, but unfortunately a wicked custom never seems to die out entirely in Africa. The officer showed me the dark gum called *mumiami*, which is used as a medicine for cramp and stomach troubles. Some use it as an ointment, while others melt it in ghee and take it internally. As a rule it is harmless and probably useless. The really sinister form of *mumiami* is that in which human blood is used. Such *mumiami* is not regarded as effective unless the victim has been specially murdered for the purpose.

Police in Tanganyika have been called in occasionally to end a reign of terror in some remote village where *mumiami* seekers were at work. The blood is taken from the neck with an elaborate ritual.

Apparently *mumiami* is not part of the original African black magic. It may have been brought to East Africa from the Persian Gulf centuries ago, for there is a Persian word *mumiai* referring to the pitch used in the mummification process. Arabs traffic in *mumiami*, and the African witchdoctor has seized upon it avidly. The demand for *mumiami* is seasonal, and police expect to hear of this ghastly superstition every year in February and March. But why this should be they cannot say.

Of course there are far more benevolent witchdoctors nowadays than

bloodthirsty sorcerers. Many of them do good work, in their own way, in areas far away from civilised medical aid. And a few have contributed something to modern scientific knowledge. The poisonous creeper of black magic still holds up progress here and there; but as a rule the tribal witchdoctor has become a respectable herbalist with some clever tricks and a deep insight into African psychology.

Ngoja, a famous witchdoctor of his day, was at the height of his career in 1923, when I first saw Dar-es-Salaam. He operated along the Dar-es-Salaam coast, treating broken limbs and snakebite cases with great skill. Ngoja also claimed to be able to prevent wives from being unfaithful while their husbands were away; and the charms he sold for this and other



worthy purposes were in enormous demand.

White doctors who studied Ngoja's methods confessed that the witchdoctor was doing more good to patients with certain disturbances of the mind than treatment in the government hospitals had achieved.

However, the shrewd Ngoja became unpopular in official circles, for he had a way of taking all the ready cash out of a village shortly before the tax-collector appeared. Ngoja is dead, but he has never been forgotten by the natives of the Dar-es-Salaam district. He was a king of witchdoctors.

Modern witchdoctors are not allowed as much licence as Ngoja. Thus a well-known practitioner named Songo was charged with quackery at Dar-es-Salaam a few years after World War

II, and fined six pounds or four months imprisonment. While the trial was in progress, twenty thousand Africans camped round the courthouse. Songo died not long afterwards, and the natives were convinced that the *liwali*, the magistrate, had cast a spell on him which had caused death.

Torday the anthropologist was at work in Tanganyika at the end of last century, when the witchdoctors were really powerful in remote places. He met Molime, a gifted woodcarver whose work is to be seen in the British Museum. Molime was also a sorcerer of no mean attainments. He succeeded in convincing thousands of tribesmen that he was in possession of the secret of making himself and his family invisible. Molime also claimed that he could enter the body of an elephant.

So Molime appeared and disappeared at dramatic moments. One day Molime's village caught fire, and every hut was burnt down. There were anxious moments for those caught in the flames; but not for Molime. He came to light with his family when it was all over, and declared that he had disappeared into the ground.

Torday never discovered Molime's secret, but he wrote: "I have the greatest respect for his cleverness".

Another experience recorded by Torday was the rescue of a grey-haired native who was about to be buried alive, a victim of a witchdoctor. The man sat near the grave which was being dug for him, eating and drinking calmly. "He was absolutely passive, and his pulse was normal", Torday noted. "He seemed to regard it as an

ordinary thing that he should descend into the grave alive".

Such is the influence which some witchdoctors still wield. Uneducated savages cannot understand the dramas of their daily lives in the wilds – thunder and storm, wild beasts in dangerous moods, sudden bodily pains and fevers. The witchdoctor solves all mysteries for them in terms, often fantastic, that they can understand.

It is a relief to turn to the witchdoctor's work as a healer. One hears many tales of African medicines still unknown to white scientists, and some of these tales are true. Mr. J. C. Cairns, who spent years in the bush as a district officer, recorded a treatment for tuberculosis administered by a tribal doctor in the Arusha area. Many people who had been given up by the white doctors were cured. This man's

son received an orthodox training as a dresser in a government hospital. Unfortunately he had no idea of his father's methods, and the secret died with the witchdoctor.

Investigation of African *meteria medica* is an enormous task because some of the plants from which the medicines are derived have not yet been identified. Nevertheless, a number of the witchdoctor's secrets have been revealed. Dr. Lester, working in Tanganyika, discovered a valuable native snakebite remedy called *kahama*, and also the *museka* lotion used for freeing the eye from the venom of a spitting cobra. It was in Tanganyika, too, that a native treatment for tapeworm, known as *lodua*, was found to be superior to the European medicines of the period. Dr. Penschke, a German, traced the local

treatment to a plant of the *Embelia* species.

Down in the south of Tanganyika the Wabena people have a useful bilharzia treatment based on an infusion from a root. They use the *mkokosi* root for urinary complaints, and white doctors have reported speedy cures by this means.

A native treatment for blackwater fever, using a cassia species extract, appears to have some value, as it stimulates fluid and has a sedative action on the stomach. Witchdoctors certainly know how to produce a flow of milk, and how to keep the baby alive until the milk comes.

Dr. T. S. Githens, a leading authority on African medical botany, examined fourteen hundred drug plants. He found that many of them were used by

witchdoctors for the same purposes as white doctors used plants of similar species. Githens expressed the opinion that an even larger number of plants of evident value were almost entirely unknown outside Africa and might with advantage be introduced into Western medicine.

Glaucoma, the disease of the eyeball caused by fluid pressure, is common all over Africa, and for many centuries witchdoctors have been treating it successfully with an extract from the Calabar bean. Only in recent years has white science realised that this is the correct strychnine treatment. Witchdoctors use alkaloid poisons as diuretics, in dropsy, and for reducing fevers and treating rheumatism.

Plant drugs which have been exported from Africa for centuries are all well-known to the witchdoctors – cloves

and cinnamon, stropanthus and tamarind, marjoram and saffron, aloes and pomegranate bark. Witchdoctors were using spices for intestinal colic and aromatic plants for wound dressings long before these items found their way into the “British Pharmacopoeia”. They knew the laxatives in fruits; the oils from the palm, the sesame and others that would form ointment bases; the irritant proteins found in seeds that would cause inflammation followed by healing.

Githens drew attention to the widespread use of the African willow in the treatment of rheumatism. The willow, of course, yields salicylic acid. Then there are the resins which the witchdoctor uses for respiratory ailments, and also to fill teeth.

Some of the finest medicine men in Tanganyika are found among the

Dorobo, also known as the Wandorobo. Their origin is a complete mystery. They follow the Bushman way of life, and they are the most skilful hunters in East Africa.

These small people of the forests are second to none as poisoners. They have a spear and arrow poison which will kill an elephant. It is said that the Dorobo make a powerful poison which they mix with snuff, and which is deadly when inhaled.

Dorobo witchdoctors are also credited with hypnotic power, and many individuals of the tribe are said to make use of telepathy. That brings me to a fascinating topic. Wherever you go in East Africa there are legends of telepathy, of great events in war and in peace that were known to the tribesmen long before the news

reached the white people by the ordinary channels.

False or true? To answer that question satisfactorily you would have to assemble a band of scientists at the spot where the telepathic messages were received, before they were received. Human evidence must be tested. Both observation and memory are often at fault. Coincidence and fraud cannot be ruled out.

I believe that one mind can communicate with another, in spite of the fact that no explanation of such a phenomenon has been found. It is probable that each human "transmitter" requires a special "receiver"; that is to say, a mind in sympathy with itself. Africans seem to possess this quality to a high degree. I think that Africa may throw more light on this queer affair in the

end than the laboratories of Western universities.

Freud suggested that telepathy might have been a normal method of communication when the world was young; that it was pushed into the background when people became more civilised. If that is correct, the right field of research will be found among the more primitive races.

The late Owen Letcher, the man who became so interested in the Sultan's skull, collected many tales of telepathy in East and Central Africa. His favourite example had its origin during the Somaliland campaign of 1906, when a number of Awemba soldiers from Northern Rhodesia were serving in the King's African Rifles.

Letcher placed on record a number of engagements in which Awemba men

were killed. Their wives and families were mourning for them in the Fort Jameson district of Northern Rhodesia weeks before the official casualty lists arrived.

"I have every belief in the absolute accuracy of this event", Letcher wrote. "Some call it presentiment or coincidence. I myself prefer to label it under the category of native telepathy, a mystery which no one can unravel, and a faculty of instinct peculiar to the lower races of mankind which we highly civilised mortals cannot pretend to understand."

All the most remarkable stories of telepathy come from countries of great distances. You hear of it among the Eskimo, in the Australian deserts, in the vast spaces of Africa. I wish that Professor J. B. Rhine would transfer the famous extra-sensory perception

tests from his American university to the endless bush of Tanganyika.

Now I am turning my back on Tanganyika and its weird tales, and settling down in the 'bus again for the last hundred miles of the Great North Road, the final stage to Nairobi.

## CHAPTER 15

### CITY OF SWEET WATER

JUST BEFORE landing on the old Eastleigh aerodrome at Nairobi in wartime I gained one of those memories that lingered through the years and helped to set me off on this journey along the Great North Road. It was a glimpse of the open grass and thorn country alive with game.

A good lunch at Namanga might have put me to sleep for some of the way to Nairobi if I had not watched the wild animals through the windows of the 'bus. That is the right approach to Nairobi, a city where, within living memory, lions roared on verandas and scratched at front-doors. A place where a lion once chased a zebra across the course during a race-meeting and made its kill behind the grandstand. You can still drive out of

Nairobi and encounter more lions, perhaps half an hour later, than the Kruger Park reveals to many visitors.

Wild animals came in from the surrounding wilderness to drink at the swamp which gave Nairobi its Masai name – “sweet water”. I doubt whether there is anyone left who remembers the old caravan camp on the Nairobi site at the end of last century. Wild animals not only drank there, but disposed of human invaders. Six of the first seven graves in Nairobi cemetery were those of white men killed by lions. The seventh white man was gored by a rhino.

It was the railway, of course, which created Nairobi, and it came about by sheer chance. No town planner would have dreamt of placing a colonial capital on this flat space at the edge of the Athi Plains; the experts would



have gone on to Limuru, about thirty miles away, on the hills. The railway was the so-called "lunatic line" from Mombasa to Uganda, built by the British (with Indian labour) to bring in civilisation and drive out the slave traders. Railway construction engineers wanted a level stretch to concentrate their rolling stock before tackling the next gradients. Nairobi was flat. So in 1899 the railhead reached this spot where the porters rested, and a railway settlement of wood and corrugated iron shacks arose. Nairobi grew into a town before anyone had realised that the haphazard shanty camp was destined to become the capital of Kenya.

Bullock-carts were used in the days (or rather nights) of bucket sanitation; and lions took the bullocks. Iron tanks held rainwater from the roofs. Zebra

rushed through the two streets at night. Lighting was by hurricane lamp.

Even in 1904 the elephants were still scratching themselves on the trees where the Norfolk Hotel, now stands. In that year the government almost decided to abandon swampy, often hot and fever-stricken Nairobi for a site on the Kikuyu escarpment. Delay proved fatal. Ugly old Nairobi grew to an extent which made a move difficult. So the town which had started as a railway dump and a row of trading shacks in Bazaar Road became a garrison town and railway headquarters. Government House, built of the prevailing corrugated iron and timber, appeared on The Hill.

The Hill, of course, has always been Nairobi's most aristocratic suburb. There I was shown some of the original wooden bungalows on stilts,

looking out over the towers of the Anglican cathedral. There I dined magnificently (thanks to George and Robbie) in the Nairobi Club. I shall remember the barman in white gown, fez, red sash and gold braided black waistcoat making a human foreground with a vivid East African landscape in the midst of the bottles. For dinner there was lake fish, roast duck and red wine. How superbly the British manage their clubs! Never tell me they do not understand food. This is solid comfort indeed.

Yet I can imagine that modern Nairobi is without much charm for those who knew it in the wild early days. No longer do settlers ride up to the bars on horseback, shooting out the street-lights with their revolvers on the way, shooting the bottles off the shelves in the bars, and paying the bill without a

word of argument. This was a town of queer pranks. The settlers included a number of titled Englishmen, former army and navy officers, adventurous spirits looking for amusement. Twice a year, in January and July, the farmers came into Nairobi to the last man for the race meetings. These were riotous holidays indeed, the time for dances and concerts and all sorts of practical jokes.

Major Robert Foran, who was in charge of the Nairobi police early this century, once recalled that only gross breaches of the peace were punished at that time.

Those were the days when the main street, the present Decametre Avenue, was an earth road. It became a bog in the rainy season, so that even the ox-wagons were held up. One night a

party of humourists planted growing mealies all over the street.

Nairobi retained its Wild West atmosphere long after the government had moved up from Mombasa. It stretched out in many directions at the whim of individuals, a shapeless town like Kimberley in South Africa; yet a town with a strong personality. You crossed a street on duckboards. Rickshaws, buggies, ox-carts and bicycles were the ordinary means of transport. Hotels had wooden tying-posts outside for customers who arrived on horseback. Some customers rode into the bars before dismounting. They wore bands of leopard skin round their wide-brimmed hats. The pioneer Lord Delamere, leader of the settlers, allowed his hair to grow over his shoulders; he was under the impres-

sion that this protected him against sunstroke.

White prisoners were a problem in early Nairobi, but it was solved by the provision of a bungalow on the Hill. There the men lived comfortably. They were free to visit the town by day, but they observed the rule prohibiting them from entering bars and clubs. That is not to say that sun downers were unknown in Nairobi's first white gaol.

Many years passed before any white person was sentenced to death. Africans were executed by firing squads in the early days. Then it was decided that the time had come to appoint a hangman, and the position was advertised. To the surprise of officials there were many applications. An ex-seaman was selected because of his knowledge of ropes and knots. He

drove the Nairobi steam-roller as his main job, and received a special fee of five pounds whenever his services were required as hangman.

This official showed great pride in his position, and always wore a black suit when he was carrying out an execution. Later in the day he would appear in the Stanley bar and spin a lurid yarn of the great event. One day the hangman was taking his whisky at one end of the bar and eyeing with obvious interest the distinguished figure of Lord Delamere at the far end.

“Why are you staring at me?” demanded Lord Delamere at last.

“I was just wondering, sir, what drop I would have to give you”, replied the hangman politely.

The pioneers find modern Nairobi too civilised and too expensive. I must say

that with no nostalgia intruding on my thoughts, I enjoyed Nairobi’s amenities. Nowhere in the world have I found a small city which reminded me so strongly (at times) of London. George and Robbie took me to a performance of “The Chalk Garden” at the Donovan Maule Theatre Club which was equal in every way to a London show. This was the flawless, polished acting of professionals. Only the presence of a few educated Indians, with their women in gorgeous saris, revealed that this was Nairobi and not the Haymarket.

Good restaurants in Nairobi are as good, and perhaps a little cheaper, than some famous places in the West End of London. I remember with pleasure the Lobster Pot, which has one of the most brilliant menu designs I have ever seen, and all the sea and

river food; Dover sole and lobster curry, fresh grilled salmon, Kenya river trout, prawns, mussels in white wine. This restaurant also provides bird's nest soup or shark's fin soup. All this more than five thousand feet above sea level, more than three hundred miles from the sea, and only two degrees below the equator.

Then there was the New Stanley grill, which presented me with a menu designed like a leopard skin. I had chops and cutlets of Molo lamb, more tender lamb than some I have tasted farther south. A good pianist entertained the diners. It was difficult to imagine the days when a bygone Irish police inspector had a wrestling match with an eccentric judge in the Stanley bar.

I suppose the old-timers with their six-shooters must deplore the coffee-bars.

Tea and coffee are grown round about Nairobi. Both are excellent, but Kenyans complain of the heavy taxes on these home products. Some of the coffee bars look more like Chelsea than equatorial Africa.

Into this smart little capital, with its shops that would not look odd in Piccadilly, come bronzed men who wear bush shirts at home. They come from places with adventurous names. Fort Hall, where Francis Hall, the man who first tamed the Kikuyu, died from blackwater. Lugard Falls, discovered by the great administrator. Dick's Head, far away on the coast beyond Lamu. Hajee's Drift, named after the Indian who set up a store and catered for settlers with ox wagons crossing the Sosiani River half a century ago. Mathews Range, the distant mountains which preserve the memory of a

British naval officer who fought the slavers and commanded the Sultan of Zanzibar's army. Lamu of the dhows and the little brassbound chests. Kenya's sophisticated capital reminds you of London one moment, wild Africa the next.

Nairobi has its blocks of flats, but the city is quiet at night because most white people live in the suburbs. They love their gardens, and many of them have an acre to grow their English flowers in the red African soil. Parklands, Westlands, Groganville (named after the first man to walk from the Cape to Cairo), Riverside, Muthaiga, Woodley: these are among the white suburbs. Asians have their own housing schemes at Ngara and Pangani, while Africans are housed admirably at Eastlands.

To the south of the city runs the Ngong River, and in the Ngong Hills such large animals as buffalo and rhino survive. Yet the city has a quarter of a million people, and I have before me a claim by the city council that it is the largest city in Africa between Johannesburg and Cairo.

I would add that it is also one of Africa's cosmopolitan cities. Where else can you see, at one street corner, a tough white hunter dressed for the safari, a Masai warrior with spear, a Sikh with turban, Hindu women in rainbow silks and a Wakamba cannibal with filed teeth?

One third of Kenya's white people live in Nairobi. They say that it is the last outpost of the easy life. I think they deserve their comfort, for it is based on fair treatment.

Nairobi is not one of those places where people complain that they have nowhere to go at week-ends. It is surrounded by natural wonders that tourists cross the world to see. I enjoyed a Sunday excursion with George to Limuru, where the tea and coffee grow close to the Brackenhurst Hotel; where the bar is like an English inn; where George and I had a herring salad for lunch, and a Madras curry, and Tusker beer.

So you must know by now that I found much pleasure in my return to Nairobi. I liked the courtesy of the motorists, the careful driving, and the kind people who always offered me a lift when they saw me waiting at a 'bus-stop. I saw smart shops and visited a number of pleasant bars, including the Equator Bar. I gazed upon the Somali shawls in the bazaar, the trophies in

Rowland Ward's shop, the soapstone vases of the Kisii people and the baskets of the Kikuyu.

Such is Nairobi where, early this century, a man returning home from a dinner party killed a lion outside the railway manager's office. He claimed to be the only man in evening dress who had ever shot a lion. In the same year a herd of eight hundred wildebeest passed through the settlement. It was in old Nairobi that Dr. Milne, the medical officer, ran into a lion while riding home on his bicycle one night. The lion bolted.

Such is Nairobi, where men became legendary figures during their own lifetimes and gained the sort of nicknames that are only awarded in the world's frontiers. Not only men, for was there not a Kiboko Mary, who

flogged a lion that she caught stealing one of her donkeys?

When you look at the clock in the Nairobi city hall tower, think of the man in whose memory it was placed there. He was Tommy Wood, the man who ran a store when Nairobi consisted of the railway sheds, the old Stanley Hotel, and Tommy Wood's store where you could buy anything from a pound of sugar to a bag of nails. Tommy cashed cheques, too, for the nearest bank was in Mombasa in those days. He was mayor of Nairobi three times. He saw it grow.



## CHAPTER 16

### UP FROM THE SOUTH

OF ALL the restless children of Africa I would place the Afrikaners first on the list. They have been trekking northwards from their ancestral home at the southern tip of Africa for centuries. You will find Afrikaners in all the territories along the Great North Road, and one of the largest colonies is at Eldoret in Kenya, north of the equator.

Afrikaner hunters and explorers were in the Rhodesia's long before the pioneers. One of them, Karel Trichardt, travelled as far as Abyssinia a hundred years ago. Afrikaners who settled in Tanganyika and Kenya went there early this century. No doubt the South African War influenced many of those who trekked away to East Africa, Angola and across the ocean to the Argentine. Drought, cattle-sickness,

locusts and depression south of the Limpopo all played a part. Do not overlook another powerful factor, the *trekgees*, the wandering spirit that has always led adventurous men beyond the horizon. They trekked and they suffered, and many died.

I believe the pioneer Afrikaner settler in Tanganyika was a Christian de Wet, namesake and cousin of the famous Boer general. De Wet arrived in the German colony at the end of 1902 and stated that he intended to explore the west coast of Tanganyika. His real object was to find land for an Afrikaner colony.

De Wet was a tall lean man. His equipment included a rifle and a hunting knife, coffee, tea and tobacco, but no luxuries. Hughes, the Bangweulu trader, met him in Northern Rhodesia. He said that De Wet went out each

morning with two cartridges, but he never fired more than one and he always returned with meat. De Wet went on over the border and was never heard of again. His disappearance remains a mystery to this day.

Several families, including the Van Landsbergs, disembarked at Tanga in 1904 with ox-wagons, oxen and all the necessities of life away from civilisation. They knew that on the northern plateau of Tanganyika, around Meru and Kilimanjaro, they would find a climate similar to that of the Transvaal highveld. There they could grow the crops they understood, maize and beans, and raise cattle and sheep. Moreover, these incorrigible hunters relied upon an unfailing supply of wild game for the pot.

General Wynand Malan and his brother W. T. Malan settled in north-

ern Tanganyika a few years after the first trekkers. In 1907 came the Pienaar family, with the young son A. A. Pienaar who was destined to become the author “Sangiro”.<sup>5</sup> They had been farming near Pretoria, but the South African War ruined them, and so they decided to settle in Tanganyika near some friends who had gone before them.

The Pioneers went by sea to Tanga and landed there with stores which they hoped would carry them to their new home. They travelled for eighty miles from Tanga to Mombo by rail. There the father left his family while he went in search of oxen to haul the wagon.

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<sup>5</sup> “Sangiro” is a Masai word meaning “the hare”, and it was the nickname bestowed on A. A. Pienaar when he was twelve years old, and small for his age.

Mombo was a fever spot. When he returned a month later, having covered two hundred miles on foot, he found his family suffering from malaria. They had no quinine, and Mrs Pienaar was seriously ill.

More dangerous experiences lay ahead, and the trek to Kilimanjaro became a nightmare. Six of the eighteen oxen died before the wagon had covered forty miles. The weakened span had to struggle along the rough bush track, for the load on the wagon was five thousand pounds.

“We carried seeds and farming implements, but there was also a heavy case containing framed portraits of our ancestors”, recalled Sangiro. “I have disliked those portraits ever since, for they added to our hardships”.

The trek which should have taken fifteen days lasted three months. On some days the wagon covered only half a mile. Once they were stuck in a deep ravine for a fortnight. Often they were hungry, father, mother and eight children. When the Pienaar family reached Meru at last, fifteen miles beyond Kilimanjaro, two of Sangiro’s brothers died. They had blackwater fever and there was no doctor in the area.

The farm on which they settled at the end of that tragic trek belonged to a relative of Mrs Pienaar’s. He sold his rights to Mr. Pienaar for one hundred pounds and departed for Portuguese East Africa to shoot elephant. The Pioneers looked round the strange world they had entered and tried to make a living.

It was hard, for the seasons were different, the rain fell in torrents, corn shot up high and then died before a grain could be reaped. At night herds of bush-pig destroyed the maize. Young Sangiro was given the task of shooting the bush-pig.

“That was the time when I first began to study animals”, he said. “Besides the bush-pig, we were troubled by leopards. I had to sleep in the kraal with the sheep, and I killed seven leopards. It was my duty to supply the household with meat. I shot Grant’s gazelle, Thompson’s gazelle, and hippo for the fat”.

The nearest settlement was Arusha, thirty miles away. The Pioneers had no horses. Sangiro tramped through the bush on foot or rode donkeys – always noting every detail of the wonderland of wild life round him.

Before the outbreak of war in 1914, Sangiro was sent back to school at Heidelberg in the Transvaal. For three years he heard no word of his family. At last he decided to penetrate the curtain of silence.

He had been writing plays in English and Afrikaans at school – and tearing them up. Then he had gone to Stellenbosch to take the B.A. course in literature, English, Afrikaans, German and Nederlands. But his anxiety about his family overcame the desire to learn, and he managed to secure a passage by sea to Mombasa.

A military railway had been built to Moshi in Tanganyika, and Sangiro covered the rest of the journey on foot. He found that his family had been forced to leave the Meru farm, as the Germans feared they would give

information to the South African forces invading the colony.

Mr. Pienaar had moved to a new area on the northern Kilimanjaro slopes, the place I have mentioned which is marked on the map as Pienaar's Heights. He had called his farm Ngesomit, a Masai word meaning "waterhole". That was where Sangiro re-joined his family and heard their story.

A sister, born after the trek from Mombo, had died from blackwater fever. The old farm at Meru, established after seven years of toil, had become a weed-grown swamp. Mr. Pienaar had started again with cattle and coffee. Sangiro remained there to help him.

In 1918 came the rinderpest, and the Pioneers lost every head of stock.

Money was needed desperately, but the coffee market had collapsed. Sangiro took to the elephant trail.

"I was able to return to Stellenbosch in 1919 on ivory", he declared. "Ivory paid for my last two years at the university". By this time Sangiro had spent so much of his life on the veld that Stellenbosch seemed a little cramped. He had lived dangerously, but adventure had gripped him and he had to find an outlet.

He found it in writing. Early in 1920, while still a student at Stellenbosch, he finished "Uit Oerwoud en Vlakke", and it was published the following year. This was his masterpiece – a book which was immediately acclaimed as a work of genius, one which has remained ever since in the front rank of Afrikaans literature. It has sold

more than one hundred thousand copies.

Such were the vicissitudes of one Afrikaner and his family in Tanganyika. Later trekkers were better organised perhaps, and they reached the Arusha area without great hardships.

Some of them seem to have been under the impression that they would be able to set up a republic in the empty country round about the great mountains. German officials soon shattered that illusion.

These freedom-loving Afrikaners found that German rule was not at all to their taste. They had trekked for thousands of miles to escape from the British. Now a number of them trekked on across the border into British East Africa and settled on the Uasin Gishu plateau.

Those who remained in Tanganyika were at first without markets for their produce. They lived on the game. War in 1914 was a serious blow, for they ranked as British subjects and the Germans interned them at Kondoia Irangi. It was not until the sisal boom and the growth of the coffee industry between the wars that the Afrikaners were able to put up gabled homesteads in the old Cape tradition; and only after half a century did their own Dutch churches arise at Arusha.

Afrikaners have also done well in the production of pyrethrum, the insecticide plant, which flourishes on the Mount Meru slopes; and many legume varieties, grown at Moshi to supply a world-wide demand.

I heard of one Afrikaner who had become prosperous enough to own a coffee farm near Arusha and a cattle

farm in the Transvaal. If the white settlers are ever pushed out of Tanganyika, he will know where to go. But the Afrikaners of Tanganyika have grown to love their land of high mountains. They speak Afrikaans, they visit the Union – and they return to Tanganyika.

Uasin Gishu, the once-remote plateau to the north of the equator in Kenya, was offered to the Zionists early this century as a national home. It was a lost world of virgin earth in the heart of Africa, swarming with thousands upon thousands of wild animals from impala to giraffe. Well, the Jews turned down the promised land, and in 1908 the Afrikaners trekked in. Their eyes were filled with wonder, for even the old Transvaal had never been like this.

Leader of the Afrikaner contingent was a patriarch named Jansen van Rensburg, and about seventy families accompanied him. Romantic accounts of the journey speak of the long overland trek by ox-wagon from the Transvaal to this new paradise beyond the equator. In fact, every single emigrant went by sea. Scouts were sent out before the main body left the Transvaal; and only when they returned with glowing reports did Van Rensburg charter a ship to carry his followers from Delagoa Bay to Mombasa.

They took the train from Mombasa to Nakuru or Londiani, and then assembled their wagons and oxen. Through the forests they trekked, guided by elephant trails. Some were six weeks on the way, climbing thousands of feet. And at last they reached the

country where the farms had been surveyed and even the most land-hungry man was fully satisfied. In a central position was a farm which the surveyors had called "Number Sixty Four". Long afterwards this became Eldoret township.

At first the Afrikaners had difficulty in mastering the seasons, and early wheat and mealie crops often failed. The nearest shops were two hundred miles away in Nairobi; a long way to go for their coffee and tobacco. Candles they knew how to make from the fat of game animals. They never bought meat or bread. Hides provided them with a little ready cash. Transport riding, that favourite occupation of the Afrikaner, kept some of them going. For six years or more after their arrival the families were living in *hartbeeshuisies* of skins and branches.

Tracks became impassable during the rainy season. (It was not until 1925 that the railway reached Eldoret.) Locusts ate the crops, tick-fever and other ailments plagued the cattle. Yet the Afrikaners survived and clung to their land when many English settlers packed up and went home.

One minister who will never be forgotten at Eldoret was the Rev. M. P. Loubser, a bachelor, born at Vissershok on the Malmesbury road. He was a teacher at S.A.C.S. before he went to German East Africa in 1905. Four years later he started work among the Afrikaners of Uasin Gishu; and such was his personal influence that he persuaded the members of the three Dutch church sects to worship together.

Between the wars a church was built for the Hervormde Kerk at the foot of



a koppie, and a minister arrived. However, when the depression set in the new church was closed, the minister departed, and the Hervormde congregation returned to Dominee Loubser. It was due largely to his teaching that the Afrikaners born in Kenya have preserved their language and traditions. Since those difficult times, of course, all three churches have been firmly established. The only Afrikaans medium school, the Van Riebeeck, at Thomson's Falls, started as a farm school and now has one hundred and fifty pupils.

Thomson's Falls, named after the young explorer who also gave his name to a gazelle, has a large colony of Afrikaners. They brought native servants from the Transvaal, and a Dutch Reformed Mission Church ministers to them. Services are in

Afrikaans. Most of these natives have lost the tribal languages of their forefathers, and Afrikaans is now their *lingua franca*.

Eldoret is a name which baffles the historians. A Kenya governor who spoke at the charter day celebrations in 1959, when the first town council was appointed, said that he liked to think Eldoret was derived from El Dorado, the fabled city of gold. "Eldoret has riches indeed – the riches of a lovely setting; a fine climate and a beautiful countryside made more beautiful by man's endeavour", declared the governor.

The mace used by the mayor of Eldoret has inscribed panels showing a trek wagon. And in the Goryndon Museum at Nairobi you will find one of the original ox-wagons used by the Afrikaner pioneers, a wagon painted in

the traditional colours. Another historic wagon has been placed outside the town hall at Eldoret.

Eldoret is a town with reminders of South Africa rather than a purely South African town in Kenya. You hear the Afrikaans voices in the *koffiehuis* and *goedkoop winkels* and *losieshuis*. Other buildings, however, have the British atmosphere.

All over the district are Krugers and Barnards, Fouches and Engelbrechts, Bouwers and Rouxs, Steyns and Snymans. Kenya natives who speak Swahili refer to them as “Uburu” – a word derived from Boer.

Most of the four thousand Kenya Afrikaners are still on the land, though many are in government service, on the roads and railways, or in business in Nairobi. Some of those who can

afford it attend university or agricultural courses in South Africa and then return to Kenya.

It is the experience of a lifetime for an Afrikaner born and brought up in Kenya to enter the homestead of his ancestors in South Africa. Some have returned for good since my journey. Others are clinging to their farms in the north.

## CHAPTER 17

### NIGHT TRAIN TO MOMBASA

ALL MY journeys lead to the sea, as I said in the beginning, and so I am leaving Nairobi now on the night train for Mombasa. It was a cheerful half hour in the platform bar, but I was not so happy when the whistle blew. Friends who live as far apart as Cape Town and Nairobi meet all too seldom.

Farewell to the gazelle, too, the kongoni and giraffe on the plains in the dusk. Farewell to Kilimanjaro in the far distance. The night train is going downhill all the time now, through the immense bush country. And I am dining admirably; one of those simple dinners in which every dish is worth eating; green pea soup, fried lake fish with lemon, roast leg of mutton with mint sauce, vanilla cream,

gorgonzola cheese and Kenya coffee. Cooked by well-trained Goans and served by Africans.

Red lights turn green as the night train glides on, Saloman bin Abdulla working the signals under the Southern Cross. No longer can I see the roses in the little station gardens. It is hard to realise that this luxurious train is running on the "Equator Line", the "Lunatic Railway".

I am assured that passengers were allowed to sit on the roofs of the coaches in the early days, so that they would see the whole natural zoo rolling past. Wood fuel was used, and the sparks were troublesome. If anyone wished to shoot a buck, however, he had only to notify the engine-driver and the train would wait.



Enormous replicas of elephants tusks form these archways over one of the main thoroughfares of Mombasa, and old ivory port.

This was the line on which the chief accountant was charged by a rhino and lost an arm. Here a transport officer was struck and killed by a poisoned arrow. Something forced me to get up in the night to stare at Tsavo station. No wonder the Indian labourers fled to the coast to escape from the man-eaters. Even now I would not care to saunter through that jungle at night.

Daybreak reveals a different world, the steamy world of the coast, the coconut palms and bananas and plantations. After many years I am in Mombasa again, a port of call for Arab dhows, Persian and Indian craft; a place built so long ago that London was no more than a primitive cluster of huts in the Thames mud. Mombasa with its baobab and frangipani, hibiscus and bougainvillea's and mango trees. Here I shall certainly

tread the paths I knew in my youth and stand again beside old landmarks.

Mombasa, the "island of war", has a Wood-stained past. Early in the sixteenth century, before the Portuguese took it, the town was described as "a very fair place, with lofty stone and mortar houses, well-aligned in streets". Even then the houses of the wealthy had carved doors.

Yet this was an island of massacres. One of the most disastrous episodes was an invasion by a cannibal tribe of Zulu stock. They came up the coast all the way from the Zambesi valley, literally eating up each village they encountered. Mombasa looked as though it had been ravaged by a horde of blood-thirsty locusts when these cannibals passed on.

Everyone still speaks of Mombasa as an island though it is linked with the mainland by two causeways and a bridge. It is almost encircled by two arms of the mainland; and in the elbows are the snug anchorages known as Kilindini (the “deep place”) where the ocean liners berth, and the old harbour on the north-east shore, the dhow harbour. Only a short stretch of Mombasa’s coral shore is exposed to the Indian Ocean breakers.

Mombasa, measuring three miles by two, is very much a fragment of Africa. Three full-grown lions, driven mad with fear by bush fires, arrived on the island by the railway causeway about fifteen years ago and terrorised the native quarter. Hundreds of Africans climbed trees. Many people were mauled and several died. An

island that is an island has certain advantages in East Africa.

Apart from the lions, Mombasa has an interesting zoological past and present. Pythons, up to twelve feet, flourish on the island in spite of the dense population; and if your pet rabbits disappear you can guess where they have gone. Hyenas were still haunting the Port Tudor neighbourhood twenty years ago. As a resident said: “They grunted loudly with pleasure when they found anything in a refuse bin.” The birds are worth studying, for you will observe egrets on the baobabs, crested hoopoes, blue jays, sunbirds and long beaked honey birds.

Liza, the giant tortoise of Mombasa, is dead. Some said the Portuguese brought her centuries ago. She lived to a great age, long enough to be run over by a motor-car. Her carapace was

preserved at the Manor Hotel when I was last there. I think she must have come from Aldabra, or one of the other Indian Ocean isles where these mysterious giants once roamed. Monkeys are still to be seen at Tudor, and you may watch them robbing the paw-paw trees.

Mombasa is full of contrasts. You have the crowded Arab quarter, with its narrow streets and barred windows and relics of Portuguese occupation, on the eastern side. In the centre are the shops and hotels with a British air, lining wide, modern streets; but here also are Indians by the thousand. White people live where the ocean breezes reach them. In the north-west spreads the African quarter. However, there are no hard and fast barriers. Mombasa is a meeting-place of races, as you might expect.

The Lord Nelson restaurant, the cool Mombasa Club down by the old harbour, the “Copper Kettle” tea-room, are all essentially English. But in the streets you meet pagan, bare breasted Giriama women with padded skirts. Arabs in white cotton *kanzus* with silver-mounted daggers in their red sashes. Copper-skinned Somalis with thin noses from the deserts of the north mingle with negroid Kavirondo dock labourers. Swahili women, with gold nose-studs, walk proudly, swathed in orange or black garments. Indian women display brilliant saris and many bangles. Hindu traders from Bombay and bearded seamen come up from the dhow harbour.

Once, long ago, I saw a huge cavalcade of happy Africans dressed in all the tartans of Scotland, and marching along the Kilindini Road

playing bagpipes and drums. Some had plaids, some had glengarrys; every man jack had a kilt. Mombasa can be relied upon for unexpected gaiety.

Now and again a magician gives a street performance in Mombasa, and the cobra battles once more with the mongoose. Or you may see an Indian chiropodist using his four inch deer horn, removing long corns aided only by suction and a little oil and beeswax.

What are the sounds of Mombasa? I remember the voice of the *muezzin* calling the faithful to prayer from the minaret of a mosque; the drums of Africa, beating night after night for the *ngomas*, the barbaric dances; the clink of tiny cups as the coffee seller wandered past with his brass urn; the Hindu temple bells. But I think the most dramatic sounds of all were made by the crew of an ocean-going

dhow entering Mombasa harbour from the high seas, blowing horns and rattling their drums.

Within living memory Mombasa had a town-crier who went round ringing a large bell and giving news of ships leaving for India. The trolleys have gone and the trolley-lines have been torn up. The long hamali-carts, like miniature wagons but hauled by half-naked singing Africans, are vanishing. I did not go in search of the camels that were once so plentiful in Mombasa, but I have an idea they would be hard to find nowadays.

I spend hours staring into shops and shop-windows, and Mombasa is a good place for this sort of lazy pastime. Here you can find almost every curio from Japanese cigarette cases to African masks. You may watch grey-bearded Indian silversmiths working



over their little charcoal fires. Close by the cobblers will be squatting on their heels, stitching and hammering. If you want ivory beads or ebony elephants, the bazaar shopkeepers will hasten to supply them. Do not fail to observe the cats in this quarter of the town. They are the lean, flat-headed, rather evil-looking Egyptian cats which I came to know in Cairo. A very old breed, and a cunning one.

Perhaps the most genuine curios offered in Mombasa, the best value for money, are the Kamba wood carvings. You see them displayed by the thousand in Salim Road and elsewhere; salad servers and bowls, animal heads and miniature elephants, ferocious masks, Masai warriors, warthogs and giraffes, crocodiles, egg cups embossed with monkeys. Many tribes in East Africa have their

specialities – Kikuyu baskets, Baganda mats, Gusii stoneware – but the Kamba carvings have gained a wider fame than other bric-a-brac. It is a remarkable and surprising story, for this is no ancient tribal craft, but a comparatively new thing.

Wakamba tribesmen live near the railway line about two hundred miles inland from Mombasa. They were hunters and warriors in the old days. Half a century ago they carved nothing more elaborate than stools and drums for their own use, or the wooden leopards that were placed outside their huts to keep real leopards away. It was crude African carving such as many other tribes achieved with equal skill.

One man, Mutisya Munge, returned to the tribe after serving as a carrier in Tanganyika in World War I, and he brought with him some carvings he



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had collected during his wartime wanderings. He and his family then became fulltime, professional wood-carvers. Other members of the tribe followed this example, the carvings were sold in Nairobi and Mombasa, and the new craftsmanship earned a certain local fame.

It was World War II that put the Kamba carvings on the map, for thousands of service men bought these handsome African curios and sent them to their homes. After the war Wakamba salesmen hawked the carvings successfully all over East Africa and as far as the Rhodesia's. Dealers in South Africa placed orders. I believe that one or two enterprising Wakamba salesmen travelled as far as London with samples.

America became interested, and a Mombasa firm was asked to forward

two thousand salad sets. Nowadays the Wakamba are producing about a quarter of a million carvings a year worth, at a rough guess, an average of ten shillings apiece.

Kamba carvings are hand-made, with tools used by the tribe for centuries, the axe, the adze and a knife for fine detail. Carvings are smoothed off with sandpaper and the final coat of wax polish gives an entirely false impression of mass production by machine.

This is indeed a strange transformation, the tribal carving industry that once turned out spoons and snuff boxes, drums and beehives for the homes of a people in remote Africa; and which has now evolved into an export trade with clever, intricate workmanship designed for the counters of great cities.

As I walked about Mombasa I renewed acquaintance with the famous baobab trees. They are living memorials to the Portuguese who died on the island long ago, for a pod was buried with each soldier, according to custom, and from each grave a grotesque tree arose. Skeletons have been found during the removal of baobabs for building purposes. Mbaraki, near Kilindini, has almost a forest of baobabs. One great tree at Kilindini has a girth of nearly sixty feet. Africans dislike cutting down these trees, for they say that a *shaitani*, a devil, lives in each one and such spirits must not be disturbed.

Every day I went to the dhow harbour, for there is no sea lover who cannot feel the fascination of these ancient craft. I watched the dhows unloading their dates and dried shark, their

Persian carpets and brassware. Some have carved prows and decorated sterns. When the monsoon changes in April they will load their tea and coffee, maize and fats, for the Persian Gulf.

Nearby is Vasco da Gama Street, where nothing changes. Some of the old houses have fine carved doors. In the lofty rooms you may see hooks embedded in the ceilings; relics of the days before fans, when the slaves worked punkahs.

Here, too, is Mlango wa Papa, “the door of the shark”, a little district where the people believe in ghosts. Here is a haunted Arab house; and when the people from that house go bathing, the sea runs with blood and the ghostly bathers return to their coral home with arms or legs missing!

Mombasa is an Arab name meaning “impregnable”. It has been conquered by different invaders, but the name remains. Mombasa is so old that the origin of the town has been lost. Possibly the Queen of Sheba stepped on shore there; and certainly Haroun el Raschid sent his traders to secure ivory and rhino horns, myrrh and ebony and slaves. Sindbad heard some of his marvellous tales in these taverns. Ptolemy mapped the coast. Marco Polo, Avery the buccaneer and Captain Kidd sailed these warm seas. Figurines of the gods of ancient Egypt have been found in the soil of Mombasa, and coins of early Chinese dynasties. This is indeed one of Africa’s oldest harbours, and that is all we can say.

When I am turned away from a place it usually makes me all the more deter-

mined to gain entry one day. Mombasa had a prison called Fort Jesus, and twice I stood at the massive entrance asking for permission to see the historic interior. I was refused in 1923 and again in 1936; but when I marched up to this medieval castle in 1958 the black door with brass spikes hung open and there was no African sentry to bar the way.

Fort Jesus is a rectangle with corner bastions. It was designed by an Italian military architect in the sixteenth century, and built of coral by the Portuguese to hold down the Arabs.

In some places the coral has weathered to yellow or grey shades, elsewhere it is pink, and sometimes it is blood red – like the flag of the Sultan of Zanzibar that flies over it, and like its own cruel past.



Mombasa had a prison called Fort Jesus, and twice I stood at the massive entrance asking for permission to see the historic interior.

I suppose there have been very few years during the three and a half centuries of Fort Jesus that human beings have not died within those walls. Death in the sieges. Death through wounds and plague and hunger. Death in one massacre after another. Death on the gallows in our own times.

I walked up a slope, for the interior of Fort Jesus was filled in long ago with many tons of soil. Now I am a specialist in African castles, having seen most of them from Cape Town to the Citadel in Cairo; from Elmina in the west to San Sebastian at Mozambique; but never have I set eyes on a huge place with high ramparts packed almost to the top with earth. No one seems to know why it was done, though many have scented buried treasure and dug hopefully.

As I came out of the twisting, covered entrance into the huge open courtyard I faced a row of cells. Opposite the cell doors grew a shady tree, and there I stood alone for some time trying to bring back the vanished scene. It is all very well using one's imagination, but a well-informed guide is better. Thus I was glad to hear the English voice of one of those men who retain a military bearing even in civilian clothes.

"You are looking at the condemned cells", announced the voice pleasantly. "The guard sat under the tree. Over there you see the execution chamber – the one painted white inside, with the heavy beam in the roof..."

My unexpected guide turned out to be a prison official who had spent many years at Fort Jesus as governor. These were his last days in the castle, for he was turning the place over to another

department. (It is now a museum.) Thus I found the voice of experience in reminiscent mood. As a lover of castles, I was almost hypnotised by the fascination of his tale.

My friend knew the prison life and also a great deal of the old Fort Jesus. He pointed out relics the guide books do not mention; scars and inscriptions that brought back the past. Portuguese workmen started raising the high walls of coral rock almost a century after Vasco da Gama had dropped anchor off Mombasa on his way to India. They needed that fortress often in their struggles with the Arabs; but the Arabs held the place at various times and strengthened it.

Once the Portuguese were at Mass in the chapel. A treacherous Arab, who was regarded as a convert, entered with a party of armed men and stabbed

the Portuguese governor to death. All the Portuguese in the fort were then massacred.

I visited the Lady Chapel in that part of the fort which had been occupied by women prisoners. Old friezes designed by the Portuguese had been covered by the whitewash that prison officials favour; but I have no doubt that the museum staff will uncover the past. A church door, graceful pillars and beams carved with verses from the Koran have not been transformed.

I had often read of the siege of Fort Jesus towards the end of the seventeenth century, when all the Christians of Mombasa and more than two thousand other people took refuge there. The Arabs of Oman had arrived in great force to drive the Portuguese out of East Africa. Portuguese ships from Goa tried to relieve the garrison,





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but they were defeated. Bubonic plague appeared among the defenders. After sixteen months only the Portuguese commander, two children, and a few African followers remained alive. Still the attackers could not scale the high walls; a handful of men held them in check.

Five hundred Portuguese, Indian and African troops came to the rescue from Mozambique and succeeded in reinforcing the garrison. But they, too, suffered heavy casualties. After a siege lasting nearly three years the Arabs stormed the undefended walls, broke in and found eleven men and two women alive. They killed these wretched survivors and threw the bodies down the well in the courtyard.

Take a good look at that well when you go to Fort Jesus, for it has a legend. Near the lighthouse out at Ras

Serani there are the ruins of Fort Joseph on the coast. Fort Joseph is half a mile from Fort Jesus. When the labourers were clearing the ground for a golf course early this century they hacked the bushes from an old flight of steps leading to a sea-cave. A secret passage led from those steps near the beach to Fort Joseph a few hundred yards away; and the passage is believed to link Fort Joseph and the bottom of the well at Fort Jesus.

It is a square well, ninety feet deep. If there is a tunnel, it would solve the mystery of the long siege; for it is hard to explain how so many people held out for years unless they received supplies from outside. They may have carried their dead through the secret passage, too, and left them for the tides to sweep away. If they buried

them in Fort Jesus, the cemetery has not yet been discovered.

The sea-cave had iron rings in the walls. It is thought that prisoners were chained there, and left to be drowned by the rising tide.

Perhaps it is significant that Fort San Sebastian at Mozambique has a similar well in the courtyard. A passage leads off the shaft. San Sebastian was used as a prison when I was there in 1923; and the guide informed me that convicts who were found guilty of serious offences were kept for a time in the darkness of the subterranean passage. All through the centuries runs the tale of man's inhumanity to man.

My friend showed me a number of cannon, including the smart brass cannon, dated 1826, brought on shore from British frigates, now used to fire

salutes at Ramadan and on Armistice Day. British occupation of Fort Jesus came about in a queer way. It seems that a ruling sultan longed for British protection early last century and persuaded the crew of a British ship to sell him their flag. He flew the Red Ensign constantly and aroused the interest of various ships of the Royal Navy that called at Mombasa. When the survey ship H.M.S. *Leven* anchored off Fort Jesus in 1824, Captain Owen saw the Red Ensign and sent young Lieutenant Johannes Jacobus Reitz to find out the meaning.

This officer was a member of the Reitz family of Cape Town. His father had served in the Dutch Navy and had fought the British at the Dogger Bank. Then he had emigrated to the Cape and taken up whaling in False Bay. The son, who became fond of the sea,

entered the Royal Navy at Portsmouth. Probably he was selected for duty in African waters because of his knowledge of Dutch.

Reitz took an Arabic interpreter with him and heard the sultan's plea. As a result, Captain Owen left Reitz at Mombasa as commandant and agent of the protecting government. A house outside Fort Jesus was provided. The sultan kept his harem in the fort and did not trust any strangers near them.

After the *Leven* had departed, Reitz set off on an exploring expedition to the Pangani River. He was struck down by malignant fever on the return journey and died. Reitz was buried among the ruins of a Portuguese cathedral in Mombasa. A fine inland harbour beyond Kilindini still bears the name Port Reitz.

Britain did not occupy the Mombasa coast effectively for many years after Reitz's death, though Mombasa became a base in the campaign against the slavers. A rebellious Arab chief seized Fort Jesus in 1875, and my friend pointed out the marks on the walls where the shells fired by H.M. ships *Rifleman* and *Nassau* struck the fort.

That was the last time the old muzzle-loaders of Fort Jesus were in action. Twenty years later the Protectorate of British East Africa was proclaimed; but the coast up to ten miles inland (including Mombasa) remains the property of the Sultan of Zanzibar, and he receives an annuity for it. Flagstaffs flying the Sultan's red flag are set in the ground of the island, and Fort Jesus has one. All other flags, even at

Government House, are flown from masts fastened to the buildings.

A narrow walk on the ramparts of Fort Jesus is known as “Vasco da Gama’s Walk”, though the explorer would have been more than a centenarian if he had lived to see this castle. Coats-of-arms of great Portuguese, including Viceroy d’Almeida of India, are to be found on the bastions. The entrance has a long inscription setting out the achievements of Major Francisco Cabreira, commander of the fort in 1635, and Gentleman of the Royal Household.

I stood in the old look-out tower where, for centuries, a sentry blew the *pembe*, a long, twisted horn, to announce the arrival of a ship. Sometimes it was an enemy fleet, and then the people took refuge in the fort. Long after the *pembe* had sounded for

the last time, the port authorities of Mombasa blew a hooter and ran up the house-flag of each ship entering the harbour.

I imagined the old defenders of Fort Jesus ramming the black powder into their muzzle-loaders, bringing up the red-hot cannon-balls, levering the guns to the correct angle, and touching off the priming powder. The fort commands both entrances to Mombasa harbour, and on the whole it served the Portuguese well.

No wonder an old Portuguese commander said of this fort: “Beneath its protecting shade we may defy our enemies. As the lamb trembles at the lion’s roar, so will the Imam shrink from that which is the terror of the world.”

Fort Jesus, of course, is the only large, solid Portuguese relic on this coast. There were never many Portuguese living on the coast, and never more than about one hundred Portuguese soldiers in the Fort Jesus garrison.

Within the shadow of the fort was one street of Portuguese residents, about seventy houses forming what was known as the Raposeira, the “fox-hole”. Portuguese looked upon Mombasa as a distant backwater. When they left, the great pile of Fort Jesus remained as almost the only sign of their former glory.

Luckily the fort has survived almost as the Portuguese left it. Arab battlements on the sea-walls have not disguised the clean and simple lines of the Italian architect’s plan; nor has the crown over the gate-tower changed the appearance greatly. Senhor Carlos de

Azevedo, the Portuguese historian who compared the plans in the Lisbon archives with the present fort, did not find important changes.

Fort Jesus has a moat of the dry type. It could not be flooded from the sea; but it was desirable to have the moat because of rising ground near two of the bastions. Three thousand followers of the Portuguese formed a refugee camp in the moat during the great siege, protected from the Arabs by the guns above, but suffering heavily from disease.

Professor C. R. Boxer has described this siege as “one of the most remarkable sieges in all history, not only on account of its length and for the unprecedented loyalty displayed by Muslims among the besieged to a Christian king they had never seen, but also for the stoic endurance displayed

by its defenders, and for the extraordinary lack of initiative shown by successive commanders on both sides.”

Very early this century Fort Jesus became a prison. Among the first white convicts was a tall, cultured Englishman who was allowed to work outside the walls. He designed the public gardens of Mombasa, taking charge of a gang of African convicts; and in return for his skilled services he was permitted one sun downer every day before returning to the fort. He also tended a grape vine, supposed to be centuries old, which the Portuguese planted in a corner of the Fort Jesus courtyard.

It would be hard to find a prison which has never known an escape. My prison officer guide took me to a point on the ramparts where two white men had

gone over the wall. It was a seventy-foot drop into the moat. They survived, thanks to landing on soft mud after heavy rain, and they were free for a day or two before the police caught them. Half a century and more as a prison leaves its marks on a place – apart from that white-washed room where they once hanged five murderers between seven and nine in the morning. Six hundred men and women, white and Arab, Indian and African, were housed within these walls, year after year.

Six hundred, sewing prison uniforms; plaiting the palm leaf mats that serve as beds; leaping to attention as the prison governor passes by. I could see it all in the empty courtyard though the last prisoner had gone out of the gateway for the last time.

High walls and bars, keys rattling in heavy doors, roll calls, the hard discipline, the long silences, parades and exercise, footsteps in grim corridors, the lash striking tortured flesh, the fall of the gallows trap with a crash that echoes through the prison. Perhaps it is just as well that they kept me out of Fort Jesus until it became a museum.

Trenches were being dug while I was visiting Fort Jesus, and the archaeologists hope the different layers of occupation will reveal the history of the place, like the kitchen middens and skeletons in the caves of primitive man. Fort Jesus has its treasure legends. Chinese pottery has already been excavated; Arab chests filled with riches may still see the light. There may be gold under the soil of Fort Jesus, but I would say that the

diggers are certain only of finding skeletons.



## CHAPTER 18

### RETURN TO ZANZIBAR

ALL THE time I was in Mombasa the thought of Zanzibar rested heavily on my mind. Zanzibar was a memory of my youth. Three times between the wars I had called at this spice island lying off the coast like a basket of tropical wealth carved from a huge emerald. I felt that I must see Zanzibar again.

Zanzibar has been called the “sleeping beauty” of Africa because it lies off the great sea routes, and remains unknown to tourists. Certainly it is far from the Great North Road, though its sinister influence in the slave days reached across Africa, beyond the lakes. You must forgive me if I wander again from the highways to satisfy a whim.

I could have flown to Zanzibar from Mombasa in an hour, but I was still determined to make this journey on land and water. So I closed in with the low green island in a ship from the north, below the dark September thunderheads.

If you should have the good fortune to land at Zanzibar, go the Bet-el-Ajab, the largest building in the town. Zanzibar’s most ornate doors belong to this “House of Wonders”. The carving of texts from the Koran is intricate, while the floral and other designs in gilt are admirable. They match in splendour the interior panelling and the imported marble.

Sultan Barghash built the “House of Wonders” about eighty years ago. Indeed, the island is littered with Barghash’s palaces, for he had visited India and seen the luxurious courts of

the princes; and on his return to Zanzibar he decided to live magnificently. So he scrapped his table silver and replaced it with gold. Camelhair divans were covered with rich silks. His hundred wives were delighted when he presented them with ropes of pearls and huge diamonds, and piled the harem floors with French carpets.

You travel up to the clock-tower of the "House of Wonders" in an ancient electric-lift which would have pleased old Barghash, but which came after his death. This palace, designed by a passing marine engineer who fancied himself as an architect, has been transformed with some loss of brilliance into a government office. Now gaze out over Zanzibar and get your bearings.

Zanzibar city is known to white residents as "Stone Town" because the

coral buildings look solid in comparison with the shacks of the African quarter and the countryside. "Stone Town" is not as old as you might think. It was a mere fishing village two centuries ago. Only when Sultan Seyyid Said changed his capital from Muscat in Arabia to Zanzibar in the eighteen-thirties did this village become the metropolis of East Africa.

Pirates and slave traders knew these narrow streets. Once the lawless visitors dared to lay siege to the American Consulate. And from these flat-roofed coral houses the Zanzibar people threw boiling oil over the invaders.

Look down now at the present sultan's palace on the waterfront. Barghash would have been ashamed of this little residence. Sentries with red fezzes, buglers, and the sultan's red flag, lend

touches of colour but not of pomp such as one might expect if you judged the palace by Zanzibar's past. Visitors are seldom shown over the palace, but they do not miss very much. It was different in Barghash's time.

An old Arab fort with circular towers stands on the other side of the "House of Wonders". Public executions were held outside the fort until almost the end of last century; so that when I first went to Zanzibar there were old guides who gloried in vivid descriptions of these memorable scenes.

More inspiring is the tower of the Anglican cathedral, for it rises from the site of the last open slave market in the world. Indeed, the altar was placed on the exact spot where the whipping post stood. A crucifix above the pulpit was made from the tree near the Bangweulu swamps where the faithful

African carriers buried Livingstone's heart. And a stained glass window reminds the visitor that many British seamen died in the long struggle with the slave traders.

Zanzibar literature which I have studied is silent about the man who bought the slave market. He was a young English missionary priest, Arthur Nugent West, who had seen the horrors of the slave trade with his own eyes, and had helped Sir John Kirk, consul at Zanzibar, in the unceasing effort to kill the great evil.

When at last the Sultan of Zanzibar reluctantly agreed to sell the slave market he named as his price one hundred thousand pounds. West was a wealthy man, but it took almost his entire fortune to pay the huge sum. He did so gladly, and handed over the

ground to the Universities' Mission to Central Africa.

Arthur West lay dying in Zanzibar on Christmas Day 1874, and on that morning the foundation stone of the cathedral was laid on the site. Thus the wish of West came true, that "a great Christian church may rise on that spot and hallow it".

Down in Main Street is the old British firm of Smith, Mackenzie, and it was here that Livingstone's body was brought for identification at the end of the long journey from Bangweulu. This firm used to organise the great chains of porters that marched to the lakes for so many years. In their books you will find many famous names, for they helped Stanley on his search for Livingstone, and fitted out Burton and Speke for their expeditions. They deal in cloves and ambergris and ivory; and

all the romantic oddments that make up East Africa's trade.

I was talking to a manager who had arrived in Zanzibar soon after World War I. Many of his African staff had been slaves. Indeed, it was not until 1911 that Zanzibar abolished the last vestiges of household slavery. The manager remembered one ex-slave who must have had the most powerful voice in Africa. He could stand on the waterfront and hail a ship at the anchorage, and make himself heard.

It was in the counting house of a British firm long ago that a clerk showed me the money his firm accepted in Zanzibar. He had a number of the magnificent Maria Theresa dollars in the till, those famous coins which I have already described. Spanish silver dollars were there, of the type first struck at the end

of the fifteenth century, the celebrated “pieces of eight” of the pirates. Those I saw in Zanzibar bore the date 1819 and the head of Ferdinand VII.

Then came rupees of the Honourable East India Company, dated 1840 and bearing Queen Victoria’s head. British gold sovereigns, Zanzibar currency specially minted for the sultans, small copper pice from Bombay, were all accepted by the firm. Last century the trading companies had to use grain at times when small change vanished; and Venetian beads and American cloth also served as currency. Even today a coin collector might find queer items and possibly a few bargains in the Zanzibar bazaar. Probably he would discover that the old Arab gentleman with the long beard had a perfect grasp of values.

Once I came to Zanzibar from India with a load of books I had gathered in the Calcutta bazaar. I had no box for them, and someone suggested: “Why not buy a Zanzibar chest?” I bought one for a few pounds. When I had paid they showed me the secret compartment, at one end, under a sort of shelf.

Some of these handsome, heavy, brass-studded chests are made in Zanzibar of island timber. By far the finest specimens are brought by the Bombay dhows, teak chests with brass plates and long brass hinges. Arabia also sends good chests. They went up in value a lot during World War II, and I believe a first-class Bombay chest now costs about fifty pounds. Zanzibar museum has some really gorgeous examples of this form of craftsmanship.

White people who have lived in Zanzibar usually take a chest or two home with them when they depart. I heard a true story of these chests which goes back to the time when slavery was abolished. Many Arab estate-owners became so desperate that they sold the jewels they had given to their wives. Some of the wives, less dutiful than they should have been, hid some of their treasures in the secret drawers of their Zanzibar chests.

A thing hidden is often lost when the owner dies. Years and even decades after the jewels were hidden, the chests were sold; and it has happened that the secret compartments – and the unexpected jewels – were discovered only after the new owners had settled down in England.

If you love oriental antiques, then the Zanzibar bazaar will fascinate you. Once there was an Arab curio merchant named Abdullah who was noted for his beautiful copper jugs and coffee pots and brass trays. You can still find attractive work in these metals.

Carved wooden spoons and stools are genuine Zanzibar curios, and so are the mats and baskets and the decorated silverware. Swords and daggers came from Arabia. The most exquisite Indian saris may easily run into three figures. Everything from a skull cap or fez to embroidered sandals may be found in Main Street or the dark alleys of the bazaar. Persian rugs are usually genuine, for these are ordinary dhow cargoes. Ivory and tortoiseshell are seen in many shapes, and ebony elephants in many sizes.

Years ago you could buy a genuine Zanzibar door from one of the old houses. This trade has been forbidden, and rightly, for what would Zanzibar be without its world-famous doors. Imitations are carved from the jack-fruit tree of the island, and these are sold to tourists. You can also buy miniatures.

It was the custom in Zanzibar for a man building a house to order the carved embossed door first and build the house round it. Richard Burton the explorer remarked: "The higher the tenement, the bigger the gateway, the heavier the padlock and the huger the iron studs which nail the door of heavy timber, the greater is the owner's dignity".

When I first went to Zanzibar I heard the traditional explanation of the great spikes that protrude from the doors.

They were to keep the elephants from battering their way into the houses. But these houses were all built long after the last elephants had been seen on the island. Some further investigation is needed. Those spikes are too prominent to be ignored.

I am always enthralled by the spectacle of exotic foods, and Zanzibar filled several gaps in my knowledge. Most memorable was the durian stall. This fruit, about the size of a little coconut and covered with spikes, has an odour which many people find revolting. To be fair to the durian, it is only when over-ripe that it gives a strong impression of decaying onions. A good durian is one of the world's delicious fruits, and the cream-coloured pulp is long remembered.

Of course I found my way to the shark market in the Malindi quarter. No

guide is needed if you are near this place of fins and flesh. A dish of shark curry is no mean feast, but it may be hard to persuade you of this fact while you are in the shark market.

Zanzibar's true aroma is more appetising. For more than a century Zanzibar has been flavouring the apple-tarts (and dulling the tooth-ache) of the world. You can smell the island's four million clove trees far out at sea, and on shore the sweet clove dust is sometimes overpowering. Once you are outside the town the great clove industry is inescapable; everywhere there are the avenues of forty-foot, evergreen trees and the buds spread out to dry on mats.

Yet all this wealth came to Zanzibar from other isles. Sultan Seyyid Said sent to Mauritius for Molucca seedlings early last century, and found that

the cloves flourished in their new home. Now the experts say that Zanzibar cloves are the most fragrant on earth. In the East, they flavour cigarettes with cloves. Coconut palms mean a lot to Zanzibar, for they yield food and drink, oil for the lamps of villages, oil for cooking, leaves for roofs and timber for doors.

Another romantic perfume which you will encounter in Zanzibar is copra, the sun-dried kernel of the coconut. Do not believe the island humourists who tell you that monkeys are trained to climb the trees and throw the ripe nuts down. The work is done by gangs of Swahilis.

Zanzibar has so many foodstuffs of its own that they say it requires an effort to starve there. Stalls are crammed with bananas and mangoes, breadfruit and eggplant, cassava and chillies,



pawpaw's and pomegranates and Zanzibar apples.

Bazaar eating-houses display heaps of the favourite Moslem pasties called samosas. Huge meat and fish curries bubble in cauldrons. And the sweets which the Arabs love are there in profusion – nougat and Turkish delight, cakes dusted with powdered coconut, sherbet and coffee.

Before you leave the high balcony of the “House of Wonders”, see whether you can pick out the castellated walls of the British Residency on the sea-front beyond Shangani Point. When this fine white building was planned early this century a small fishing village was demolished to make way for the house and garden. The fishermen were angry, and one old wizard laid a curse on the new building.

Innocently the official and his family and staff moved in. But they could not sleep in peace. Everyone was greatly troubled by nightmares and forebodings. One resident after another suffered misfortunes. Finally, soon after World War I, the wife of a British Resident suggested that the Bishop of Zanzibar should be called in. This was done, the bishop held a service in every room, and the evil atmosphere departed.

Zanzibar has more haunted houses and ghost stories than any other island I know. Moreover, the tales have been told by people whose sincerity could not be doubted.

Dr. Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, who went there at the end of last century and remained for many years, often spoke of his encounters with

ghosts. He was relied upon to exorcise spirits.

Once he was called to a mud house. Great pieces of earth, he said, were flying about the house and falling on the people. Dr. Weston formed a cordon round the house to make sure that no human agency was at work. The earth continued to fall and one fragment struck the bishop. He then exorcised the house and the people in it by prayer, and the earth stopped falling.

I heard of a missionary who spent such an uneasy night in a Zanzibar house that he made inquiries about it in the morning. He was told that a child had been murdered in the room he had occupied.

Zanzibar grips so firmly that few travellers have time to explore the

islets lying off the main island. Yet each of these weird little fragments of the sultan's territory possesses an atmosphere of its own, a story of queer events or swashbuckling drama.

During my third visit to Zanzibar I left the vivid life of the town reluctantly, hired a motor-launch and thus set foot on several of the little-known islets. I did not regret the effort.

Prison Island, a few miles from the Zanzibar waterfront, was the first coral rock at which I touched. As I waded up to the sandy beach a Swahili came rushing down to meet me. "Sir, your permit", he demanded.

As I had overlooked this formality I strode on with the man running, almost weeping, at my side. "Sir, I beg you to leave this island. See the notice

board, sir. It is forbidden to land without a permit”.

In this disturbing fashion I started my ramble round Prison Island. I saw the turtle pool, with many a luxurious plate of soup swimming lazily in the shadows. There was an aged tortoise grazing peacefully in the bush. The Swahili stopped his pleading for a while to stand on the centenarian's great shell. Small gazelle roamed in the little jungle of the island. I skirted the pits from which the coral was taken for the first buildings in Dar-es-Salaam on the mainland, forty-five miles away. I walked through the double-storied prison which gave the island its present name. For some reason the prison was never occupied, though the island has been used as a quarantine station for smallpox victims on several occasions.



There was an aged tortoise grazing peacefully in the bush. The Swahili stopped his pleading for a while to stand on the centenarian's great shell.

On the chart the island appears as Chango, twenty feet high, half a mile in length. An Arab owned it in the old days and punished disobedient slaves by marooning them there. Then General Mathews, a former commander of the sultan's troops, purchased it. The island is now government property, and bungalows have been built for the use of officials and visitors in search of a quiet island holiday.

A marvellous spot is Prison Island for that purpose, in spite of the grim name. There is an abundance of fish. Fowls are available and coconuts and fruit may be plucked. If I hired the bungalow I should certainly poach a turtle from the pool. I shall always remember swimming in that transparent water while the guardian of the island moaned his protests.

Prison Island has long been the favourite picnic resort of white residents of Zanzibar, and a retreat for honeymoon couples. Once there was a wedding attended by the officers of a man-o'-war in Zanzibar harbour. When the young couple departed for Prison Island that evening they found themselves in the strong beam of a searchlight that did not waver from the bungalow until the dawn. Nevertheless, the island is one of those forgotten fragments of a busy world where many a tired soul has found rest and refreshment. In future it will be my dream of a languorous tropic isle, all the more alluring because it is so close to Zanzibar.

Last century there was a Tree Island close to Prison Island, and coconut palms bowed to the monsoons above the sparkling sea. Rain and wave



A marvellous spot is Prison Island in spite of the grim name...a retreat for honeymoon couples.

action eroded and undercut the islet, so that today there is nothing to be seen but a gleam of white sand on a coral reef. The same process is at work on Bat (or Kependiko) Island, which I visited; but this little, uninhabited place still rears its tangle of heavy bush above the surface. It is the home of pythons and hermit crabs, and the flying foxes that swoop towards Zanzibar town in the evening to feed.

Grave Island, once known as Chapwani, and also as French Island, has long been reserved by the sultans of Zanzibar as a cemetery for English people. There I read the inscriptions on tombstones of Royal Navy men who fell in fights with the slavers – fights that occurred within living memory. There, too, I saw the memorial to twenty-four seamen and marines of H.M.S. *Pegasus*, killed in

1914 when the old cruiser was surprised and sunk by the German cruiser, *Koenigsberg*. Every year the white residents of Zanzibar lay wreaths on this grave, and every British man-o'-war calling there sends men to Grave Island to keep the little plot ship-shape. Over the porch way I read the weathered inscription:

Thy will be done.

Wave may not foam nor wild wind  
sweep

Where rest not England's dead.

On the beach at Grave Island I noticed scraps of pumice stone, which puzzled me at the time. Later I was told by a geologist that this volcanic flotsam was undoubtedly a relic of the great Krakatoa eruption fifty years ago. The pumice took three years to drift across the Indian Ocean; then all the Zanzibar

beaches were littered with it and some still remains.

One island guarding the Zanzibar anchorage was ceded to a cable company many years ago. This is Bawe, a low island of coconut trees where the deep-sea cables come on shore. Beyond that is a reef where the hull of the Eastern Telegraph ship, *Great Northern*, lost in 1909, still looms up like a fortress in tropic seas. It was Christmas Eve, there was to be a party in the cable mess at Zanzibar, and the captain of the *Great Northern* was anxious to arrive in time. He cut one corner a little too fine and lost his ship.

Chumbe Island, eight miles from the town, is now connected by telephone cable with the mainland. There is a reason. The island lighthouse was attacked by the crew of a pirate dhow

only a few years before World War I, the keepers were wounded and the lighthouse stores ransacked.

Most mysterious of all the off-lying islands is Tumbatu, a narrow, rocky, tree-covered place five miles in length and situated on the north-west coast of Zanzibar. The people of Tumbatu, about three thousand souls, are entirely different from the races found in Zanzibar itself. They represent the nearest approach to the aboriginal Zanzibaris, though centuries ago they mixed with Persian invaders and still claim direct descent from the kings of Shiraz.

The proud inhabitants of Tumbatu have the reputation of being the finest sailors and local pilots on the East African coast. They keep to themselves and they will allow no Indian storekeepers to settle among

them. No water is found on Tumbatu, so this and many other supplies must be brought from Mkokotoni opposite the island.

There is no doubt that Tumbatu formed an independent state during the time of the Persian occupation of Zanzibar. Ancient ruins of distinct Persian type, built between 900 and 1,200 A.D., show where this important city of the Zenj Empire once stood on Tumbatu. By the sixteenth century it had been abandoned, and the modern Persian-Africans of Tumbatu live in three villages.

The Mafia Island group, to the south of Zanzibar, were ports of call for many a buccaneer and pirate crew. Chinese junks traded with the islands during the eighth and ninth centuries, judging by the coins dug up on Mafia. (The theory is supported by the fact

that the first Portuguese navigators met Chinese junks in East African waters.) Then came the Arabs and also, according to legend, people in war canoes from Madagascar. Germany took possession in 1890, and a British expeditionary force captured the islands in 1915 after a short bombardment. Mafia then became the base for sea and air operations against the *Koenigsberg* in the Rufiji Delta.

A Mafia island legend relates one of the most dramatic stories of revenge I have heard. It concerns a sunken village which can still be seen beneath the clear green water off Ras Kisimani at the north-east corner of Mafia. They say that the people of this village built a large dhow and invited the inhabitants of the neighbouring island of Juani to attend the launching ceremony. During the feast a number of



children of Juani were taken by force and tied up on the beach. The dhow was then launched over this human sacrifice.

For eight years the Juani islanders brooded over this wrong, the crime that had been almost forgotten on Mafia. Then they asked the Mafia people to a wedding. The unsuspecting guests were shown into a room, specially prepared for them, with thick walls. Food and drink were served, and one by one the hosts slipped away, leaving the merry Mafia islanders to enjoy the rich entertainment. Their skeletons are still in that room, for the Juani people bricked up the entrances. A month after that ghastly revenge, so they say, a tidal wave swept the village of Ras Kisimani into the sea.

Zanzibar has a sister island twenty-three miles to the north. This is Pemba, named by the early Arab explorers "Al Huthera", the Green Island. Green and beautiful it may be, but Pemba is looked upon as Africa's university of witchcraft. In other parts of Africa devils are feared, but among the Pemba people devils are friends.

The greatest magician of all, a man who confers evil degrees, as it were, on lesser craftsmen in East Africa, lives in the remote bush of Pemba. It is said that before a young witchdoctor can be admitted to the dark circle he must poison a relative without being detected.

Right up to the end of last century the creeks of Pemba gave shelter to slave traders. White wooden crosses in the bush mark the graves of British seamen who were killed in hand-to-hand

encounters with the slavers, or who went down in the deadly malarious climate. The deaths of Captain Brownrigg, R.N., and a young lieutenant named Cooper in desperate engagements with slave dhows are remembered by very old inhabitants of Pemba. The sultan sent a small army to capture the Arabs who attacked Captain Brownrigg and his men. Two of the villains were brought to Zanzibar and found guilty. A public execution was demanded by the British Consul General. This the sultan refused, as Mohammedan law declares that the murder of a Christian by a Moslem cannot be punished by death. So the murderers went to prison for life.

These fierce days do not seem far distant along the shores of Pemba. Almost every place name recalls some

blood-stained page in the island's story. It was the custom of the slavers to throw their human cargoes overboard when they were in danger of search by a man-o'-war. Thus there is a village in a mangrove swamp named Chake-Chake – “every man for himself”. Many a slave perished in that creek.

Members of a British military survey party sent to map the interior of Pemba some years ago were puzzled by a loud whistling noise repeated every night. On windless nights it rose to a screech and continued for hours. No bird or animal, the officers decided, could have produced such a note, and the natives denied all knowledge of it. No doubt the queer sound was the work of witchdoctors. White officials had previously reported similar

attempts by the natives to scare them away.

November is the month when the dhows sail from Arabia and India with the north-east monsoon. By the end of December there may be three thousand dhows in the anchorage or careened in the long creek behind Funguni Spit. This is the last great sailing fleet on any of the ocean highways of the globe.

The earliest Portuguese explorers, seeking the sea-road to India, found ocean-going dhows as far south as the island of Mozambique. It was from Arab dhow skippers, indeed, that Ptolemy gathered the information for his famous map of East Africa. The design of these roving craft has not changed through the centuries. In ships of this very type Alexander's



November is the month when the dhows sail from Arabia and India with the north-east monsoon. This is the last great sailing fleet on any of the ocean highways of the globe.

army travelled from Karachi to Mesopotamia.

These dhow sailors are the Vikings of the East. Their vessels, like the old Norse long ships, are undecked save for the small, high poop. Lateen-rigged, they are driven by one or two large matting sails. The mainmast rakes well forward. I have often wondered how the mast stands the strain, for the running and standing rigging of coconut fibre is always old and frayed. At close quarters, in fact, the dhow has about her a decided air of antiquity. Few can afford paint. A mixture of porpoise-fat and lime, or fish oil is smeared heavily over the splintered planking. Some have carved bowsprits, and eyes such as every Chinese junk wears are often seen in the bows. Their square sterns are roughly hewn. Barnacles cling to the

heavy rudder, a rudder such as Noah might have shaped for his Ark.

I saw dhows being built. This is a leisurely trade, and a skilful one. The carpenters possess few tools, but they are expert in the use of the adze. Good timber comes from the forests of East Africa; the hard, solid baulks which dhow builders prefer. A large dhow has two skins, with the space between filled with lime to make her watertight, so that if the skipper does make an error in navigation she will still float after scraping over a coral reef.

Not a nail is used in the construction of a dhow. Every plank and timber, deck beam and stringer is fastened with wooden pegs. This method, of course, gives a ship long life, for there are no metal spikes to corrode.

Everything about a dhow is massive, bulwarks, tiller, cleats and spars. You have only to step on board one and observe the size of her ribs to see why she rides so low in the water. Yet the dhow is extremely strong. She has the right lines for a sea-going craft, the powerful bow, the beam and a stern that will not be swamped when she runs before a gale.

Some of the dhows I saw at Zanzibar were more than a hundred feet in length. You could sail round the world in them. There is nothing decrepit about a dhow when you see her with the trade winds filling the great sail and the fine bow throwing up white spray on an emerald sea.

Travelling by dhow, of course, is an experience which takes us back to the early days of ocean transport. The odours of past cargoes cling to these

hard-bitten wanderers of the Indian Ocean. Cargoes of frankincense and skins, coffee and ivory, carpets and dates, cloth, rice, sponges; all these have been heaped in the open hold, and the passengers sit on top of the lot with their baggage.

There are a few water-casks; but the dhow skippers are painfully careless about this matter, and think nothing of holding up a liner for fresh water. (One sometimes suspects that they do it for the sake of the tobacco and other luxuries they beg on these occasions.)

Meals in a dhow are simple, too. There is an iron box, half filled with sand, for cooking. The crews seem to be able to live indefinitely on a diet of Zanzibar oranges, rice, dates and dried shark's flesh. Flying fish come on board at night, attracted by lanterns,

and sometimes a turtle asleep on the surface is captured.

No scrubbing of decks or polishing of brass work disturbs the lazy sea routine. The Arab seamen care little if the passage is long. Their proverb says: "Do not count the days of a month which do not belong to thee". Each morning before dawn there comes the call to prayer. "Allaho Akobar!" In the evening when the sun touches the blue sea-rim, the skipper acts as priest again. All on board face Mecca, dropping to the deck with their foreheads touching the wood, kneeling until the last words are chanted. "Peace and the mercy of Allah be on you!"

Cyclones take heavy toll of the dhows year after year. Cape Guardafui, that sinister cape which even late last century was known as "the unknown horn of Africa", has claimed whole

fleets of dhows. For a dhow is built to run before the wind; she cannot always claw off a lee shore. Many dhows carry no red and green navigation lights at night, so that they are sometimes run down by steamers. Some founder in mid-ocean.

Yet the old dhow trade flourishes, marvellous to relate, in an age of turbines and motor ships. I see them now, with the monsoon droning in their huge square sails, the brown crew singing, the red flag of the Sultan of Zanzibar at the main. Vikings of the East indeed, sailing to fascinating harbours over the horizon.

By now, your ship will have filled her tanks with the water that Sultan Barghash brought by pipeline from Bububu, "the place of bubbling water". That ended the cholera outbreaks which had been killing

thousands. Zanzibar water is the purest on the whole coast. It is specially famous among shipping people because it comes to them free, as Moslems are forbidden by their religion to charge for water.

Yes, the tanks are full and the Blue Peter cannot be ignored. You must go on board your liner, and very soon I must be thinking of the return to Mombasa and the last stages of these wanderings that started on the Great North Road.

## CHAPTER 19

### THE IVORY HUNTERS

MOMBASA, the old town, was built on slaves and ivory, “black ivory” and white. Mombasa was sending ivory to India in dhows a thousand years ago. You can still see the tusks on the wharves and in the godowns occasionally, but never the huge white piles that Mombasa waterfront once knew.

Ivory has had a great past in Africa, all the way from Table Bay to Cairo, up and down the Great North Road, all along the tropical shores.

When I visited Mombasa in the *Gloucester Castle* nearly forty years ago a Kenya old-timer came on board and shared my cabin. Thorne was his name, and he was a cattle inspector. He wore an enormous sun-helmet, a shapeless Norfolk jacket, riding

breeches and blue putties. A crane was swinging a load of ivory on board, and Thorne told me a tale of ivory.

“They come pretty small nowadays, most of the tusks”, Thorne remarked. “Go along to the museum when you’re in London, my lad, and you’ll see the largest tusks ever cut out of an African elephant.”

According to Thorne, the elephant was shot on the Kilimanjaro slopes by a slave employed by Shundi, a notorious Arab slave and ivory trader. The slave carried a muzzle-loader and followed the gigantic elephant for weeks before firing a shot. When the tusks were put up for sale in the Zanzibar ivory market in 1898 they were the talk of the island. Thorne remembered that each tusk weighed well over two hundred pounds, about four times the weight of a normal large tusk. They



should have been sold as a pair, but they became separated.

One of these record tusks found its way to the British Museum of Natural History in South Kensington and the other came into the possession of a Sheffield firm. Years later the museum secured the second tusk, and mounted and displayed the pair triumphantly.

I thought of Thorne when I rang the inquiry bell at the museum (just outside the whale hall) and asked to see the largest tusks on earth. A good many years had passed since Thorne had told me the story, but (like the elephant) I had never forgotten it. Now I was on the trail, like that slave with the muzzle-loader.

They handed me over to the most attractive young woman zoologist I have ever met. She led me through

underground vaults crammed with specimens, stuffed with the relics of distant adventure, an atmosphere I had glimpsed elsewhere. (The sultan's skull, if you remember.) Yes, here was another museum with more half-buried treasure than the staff would ever have time to study. But there was a book, she said, which would give details of all the tusks in the collection.

Sure enough, this huge volume listed a tusk weighing 226 lb. which the museum had bought in 1901 for £350. This massive tusk was more than ten feet in length. The museum had acquired another ten-footer of known history weighing 214 lb. in 1933. Though the tusks were not symmetrical, the experts agreed that they must have been a pair. "These tusks are believed to be the heaviest

ever known, and certainly the heaviest ever recorded”, noted a staff zoologist. So old Thorne had known what he was talking about.

Even then it was a hard job finding those tusks. “People prefer to see something more realistic than a pair of tusks – something like that elephant with upraised trunk that you saw in the hall when you came in”, remarked my guide. “So the largest tusks in the world, which cost hundreds of pounds, are sent down to the basement”.

I examined many dusty tusks that day. Some of this superb ivory had been given by Indian princes to British monarchs and it had come from Buckingham Palace to the museum. There were great tusks marked “region unknown”. And finally I set eyes on the heaviest tusks of all, mounted on a plinth and resting in a forgotten

corner. The museum assistant pointed out that the shorter, heavier tusk had evidently been the “working” tusk. In life, this pair of tusks must have almost met at the tips.

“But there is some mystery about these tusks”, declared the assistant, consulting the records again. “Rowland Ward the taxidermist records a single tusk weighing 235 lb. – the largest single tusk in any collection, owned by Sir E. G. Loder. Then there is a statement that a 250lb. tusk used to be on exhibition in the Zanzibar custom house. And the Paris Museum bulletin speaks of two Dahomey tusks, one weighing 250 lb. and the other 205 lb. So there may have been a heavier pair than ours, but we have the heaviest known pair.”

I made further inquiries. They told me in Tanganyika of a German hunter

who had shot an elephant on the Bohora Flats just before World War I and shipped the tusks to Germany. One tusk measured twelve feet three inches, the other twelve feet one, and they were both perfectly straight. No longer tusks have ever been measured. Unfortunately the weights are not available, and never will be, for the war came, the ship was torpedoed and the record tusks are lying on the sea floor.

They tell the story in Kenya of a legendary elephant known to the tribesmen as Mahomet, with tusks weighing about 280 lb. apiece! They have not been weighed because Mahomet is still alive and roaming the northern frontier districts. Mahomet has killed several hunters, and now he is protected.

Blayney Percival, the first game warden in the territory, described Mahomet as a monster sixty years ago, when he saw him in the Matthew Range. Natives say Mahomet is a centenarian. This old giant covers a small area for an elephant, probably because of the weight of his ivory. Poachers always left him alone. They knew that no camel would carry such tusks. One day, perhaps, Mahomet will be found dead and the tusks will be handed over to the government and there will be a new world record.

The late Baron von Blixen, well-known white hunter, once saw an enormous elephant while flying between Nairobi and the coast. He estimated the ivory it carried at 500lb., and set out on safari to locate it. Tribesmen in the area, the Mkamba country, knew that elephant and called

it Mai; but Von Blixen never came within range of it. Mai remains a hunter's dream, possibly with tusks that would exceed the weight of the Kilimanjaro giant's ivory.

Aldrovandus, the Italian sixteenth century naturalist, reported a tusk fourteen feet long and four feet in circumference which had been brought to Venice – “a tusk in weight beyond a man's power to lift”. Length and great weight do not always go together, however, where ivory is concerned. Short, massive tusks are heavier than long slender specimens. The longest known elephant tusks are a pair to be seen in the museum of the New York Zoological Park, received in 1907 from Abyssinia. One measures eleven feet five inches and the other exactly eleven feet. The combined weight is only 293 lb.

Northern Rhodesia has known some great tuskers. Hughes, the Bangweulu trader, said that the Arab slave caravans took enormous tusks from the lake to the Zanzibar market. One tusk was so heavy, a chief informed him, that four porters carried it. Near the lake is a place called Msitu-wa-Mano (“forest of tusks”), where a huge pile of bones and skulls of elephants was to be seen early this century.

African hunters, armed with muzzle-loaders by the Portuguese at Tete, were responsible for much slaughter, and the large tuskers vanished long ago. It would be hard to find a tusk weighing one hundred pounds nowadays. East African elephants, and some in Uganda and the Nile basin, carry the heaviest ivory in Africa today.

Ivory shares with amber a place in the earliest records of the human race. Fleets were sent to Somaliland from Ancient Egypt to shoot elephants with huge bows and arrows and bring back the ivory. Carthaginian coins bear the long head of an African elephant. Five thousand years ago there was an ivory city on an island in the Nile, a vast storehouse drawn upon by craftsmen making ornaments for the royal household. Ivory thrones were made in ancient Rome.

Carvings of extinct animals are found on ivory. Stone Age people fashioned ivory into statuettes. Bracelets, sword hilts, boxes and combs and scarabs were made of ivory thousands of years ago. Ivory was always valuable in the East, and the Arab geographer El Masadi pointed out in A.D. 957: "Tusks sold by the Zanj (people of

Zanzibar) ordinarily go to Oman, where they are sent to China and India. In China the kings and civil and military notables use chairs of ivory. Ivory is in demand in India for sword hilts and dagger hilts and for making chessmen."

For a long period the ivory trade with Europe died out completely. A revival came about in the seventeenth century, when trade was opened up with West Africa. Last century the East African ivory trade flourished.

Africa killed a great many ivory hunters, and enriched the survivors. All through the continent runs the dramatic story of the ivory trade. Van Riebeeck, first Dutch governor of the Cape, gave the Hottentots a wad of tobacco for three tusks not long after his landing in 1652. The hunt was on. Elephant herds in the Kalahari were

still so large in the middle of last century that Livingstone reported the killing of nine hundred elephants in the Ngami area in one year. Gordon Cumming the hunter could exchange a single trade musket worth sixteen shillings with the Bechuanas for over one hundred pounds weight of ivory.

African potentates in the Rhodesia's and the Congo owned so many tusks at one time that they set up ivory palisades round their huts. Timber was eaten by white ants, but ivory was almost indestructible.

Ivory knew no rivals last century, when every wealthy home had a billiard room. Ivory provided handles for the finest knives. Grainless white ivory keys graced every first-class piano. Makers of napkin rings, combs, brushes and mirrors all demanded warm, mellow elephant ivory. Dentists

preferred hippo ivory, but the billiard ball experts knew that no other material had the mysterious resilient quality of elephant ivory.

So the war on the elephant went on in every corner of Africa where large herds lingered. In a single year thirty thousand tusks would pass through Zanzibar; while Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa also handled vast cargoes of this "white gold" of Africa. Almost every year in the latter half of last century about fifty thousand elephants were killed to satisfy the London market alone.

When the slaughter was halted in East Africa, the hunters went on to French Equatorial and that almost incredibly rich hunting ground known as the Lado Enclave, a swampy forest in the Sudan. Bands of white filibusters roamed this unhealthy area fifty years

ago, and those who survived made fortunes. Within two years, twelve thousand elephants had been killed, yielding ivory worth half a million pounds. Sometimes rival hunters fought each other, and there was something of a scandal when an American poacher named Rogers was shot dead in one such battle.

Who holds the African elephant hunting record? I doubt whether the point will ever be settled, but there are a number of sensational claims. A good many possible claimants are dead. Sir Samuel Baker the explorer, and the famous hunters R. J. Cunninghame and A. H. Neumann, placed the elephant first on the list of Africa's dangerous animals.

As a rule, man and the elephant do not live together amicably. Elephants will destroy a harvest in a night, and so the

different African governments set aside reserves for elephants and land for farmers. When the elephants trespass on the farmer's domain, the control officer steps in – and shoots.

Thus it is not surprising to find elephant control officers at the top of the list of elephant killers. My old friend Varian, the man who built the Lobito Bay railway, assured me that Captain R. J. D. Salmon (the celebrated "Samaki" Salmon) held the record with a total of more than three thousand elephants. If the figure is correct, no one approaches Salmon.

Salmon, a South African born in Cape Town, became game ranger in Uganda. Once he tackled a herd thousands strong which was devastating the cultivated areas. A rough census had shown an elephant population of sixteen thousand, with

an annual increase of twelve per cent. Thus the control was justified, and Salmon shot forty elephants in one day, two hundred and thirty in three weeks. His wife Celia always accompanied him, and she, too, was a crack shot. Salmon was the hunter selected to look after King George VI and other royal personages in East Africa.

Mr. George Rushby, a former Tanganyika, control officer may come next on the list with two thousand elephants. He started as a professional ivory hunter soon after World War I, when Tanganyika was issuing free licences so that rogue elephants might be exterminated.

For nine years he marched with his twenty carriers. Once he shot four elephants in a week with tusks which gave him £400 clear profit when he

sold them in Dar-es-Salaam. Sometimes he crossed into Northern Rhodesia, where he saw hundreds of elephants passing through the swamps near the Congo border. Once he was flung into a swamp by a wounded elephant.

After shooting more than four hundred elephants, Rushby married and took up coffee planting in Kenya. "All the old professional hunters get killed sooner or later", he declared. "It's a good game this, and a good game to get out of also if you can".

Rushby found that he could not get out. He went back to Tanganyika to achieve the remarkable score I have given. Rushby also shot a great many lions, including some of the man-eaters that killed a thousand people round Njombe at the end of World War II.



In spite of all the killing, Rushby estimates that there are still more than sixty thousand elephants in Tanganyika. Twenty thousand of these, he says, are breeding cows that produce a calf every third year. According to Rushby, there is a net increase of two thousand elephants a year.

“Shoot at the brain”, advises Rushby. “Use sharp-nosed bullets. The knee shot is supposed to stop a charging elephant, but it is dangerous.”

It is possible that Mickey Norton, that famous old poacher whose heyday was in the 'nineties of last century, may have shot as many elephants as George Rushby. (I touched on the activities of Norton and his partner Rabinek in my description of Bangweulu.) Norton took up elephant hunting in Northern Rhodesia when the Belgian Congo became too hot for

him. Then he shot and traded in Portuguese East and the old German East Africa, and also prospected for minerals. At one time Norton made his headquarters on an island in the Rovuma river, the boundary between the Portuguese and German colonies. He raised the Union Jack over his camp, and no one interfered with him because the ownership of the island had never been settled. This arrangement enabled Mickey Norton to poach on both sides of the river.

Norton served as an intelligence officer in German East Africa during World War I, carrying out useful work behind the German lines. Then he went back to the ivory trail.

The government engaged Norton as an elephant control officer in Tanganyika because they thought that such an old poacher would know how to deal with

ivory raiders. Early in World War II the old hunter took part in the tsetse fly campaign in Tanganyika, and he was still at work in 1947 when he died near Mwanza. He was a poor man, though he had made and lost fortunes. Everyone spoke well of him. He was the last of the old-time elephant hunters – one that the elephants could not kill.

Arthur Neumann has often been described as the greatest elephant hunter of all time. His score was over one thousand, all shot for the ivory, and not as a control officer bent merely on destruction.

Neumann was a hermit. Selous was his friend, but they seldom met. Neumann was the pioneer white ivory hunter in a number of areas, though he preferred the Abyssinian border. He used a .303 rifle, for the high-velocity weapons

were before his time; and his score is all the more remarkable when you consider that fact. Neumann advocated the heart shot. He killed fourteen elephants in one day, but never made a fortune.

Two elephant hunters in the same class as Neumann were Captain Jim Sutherland and W. D. M. (“Karamoja”) Bell. Sutherland had shot more than twelve hundred elephants by 1930, the period when the price of ivory fell and many of the old professionals dropped out of the game. But Sutherland knew no other life. He always said that he would die on the spoor of an elephant. That is what happened to the legendary Jim Sutherland, far from anywhere in the Sudan.

“Karamoja” Bell made Equatorial Africa his hunting ground in the years

when licences were unknown, and he made the game pay handsomely. One safari brought him over £7,000. His total bag was one thousand and eleven elephants.

I must not forget the celebrated game warden, Mr. F. G. Banks, known as “Deaf” Banks. His deafness never worried him, and he shot well over one thousand elephants during his long career. Banks set up a queer record in Uganda by killing three elephants as a result of one shot. What happened was that Banks gave the first elephant the heart shot. It dropped so heavily against two others that all three fell together over a cliff.

Northern Rhodesia appointed three elephant control officers between the wars. One of them, Freddy Hall, was killed by a lion. Charlie (“Anzac”) Ross was trampled to death after

shooting five hundred elephants. He lost his right eye some years before his death, but went on shooting from the left shoulder. They buried him in the hunter’s cemetery at Mpika where, according to the natives, the elephants trumpet over the graves.

Captain R. W. M. Langham, M.C., the only survivor of the trio, is one of the select band who can claim more than one thousand elephants. Langham discovered that the natives often named “killer” elephants after one of the victims. Thus an elephant named Patamila, in the upper Luangwa Valley, had taken the name of a native hunter who had specialised in waiting in a wild fruit tree for the elephants to come and feed, then dropping weighted spears on them.

Some of the old Boer hunters in South Africa handled their elephant guns as

skilfully as any of the men I have listed, but they never had the chance of securing such enormous hauls of ivory as the professionals in Equatorial Africa.

Elephants disappeared from the Cape Peninsula soon after the arrival of Van Riebeeck in 1652; but fifty years later an elephant was shot just beyond the Cape Flats. Elephants lingered along the south bank of the Orange River early last century. Elephant hunters were active in the Eastern Cape Province a hundred years ago. The surviving herds at Knysna and Addo were then granted protection, and a few of their descendants are there to this day.

St. Lucia Lake in Zululand had a small elephant herd early this century. A solitary bull elephant was observed in Zululand in 1916. The last elephants

left the Transvaal in 1902, but some have since returned from Portuguese territory and have found sanctuary in the game reserve.

Mozambique is still the home of vast elephant herds. My friend T. G. Robertson, a keen observer of wild life, saw a herd more than one thousand strong in the swamps on the east coast of Mozambique during World War II.

Petrus Jacobs, who operated in the Ngami region a century ago, shot seven hundred and fifty elephants. He might have shot more, but a lion mauled him when he was sixty-eight. Though he survived and lived for some years longer, he never followed the ivory trail again. Jacobs was one of the first white hunters to venture into Matabeleland and Mashonaland, His partner was another great hunter of the

period, Jan Viljoen, one of the first white men to visit the Victoria Falls.

A later Bechuanaland hunter named Van Zyl once drove a large herd of elephants into a bog near the western Kalahari frontier. He and his men shot more than one hundred of these trapped elephants in one day.

Major P. J. Pretorius, D.S.O., probably the greatest Afrikaner hunter of this century, claimed a total bag of five hundred and fifty-seven elephants. Shortly before World War I this thin, quiet man of iron nerve marched into Dar-es-Salaam after a six months' safari with ivory which he sold for £3,600. Pretorius was employed by the Union Government after World War I to exterminate the Addo elephants – a most regrettable affair. He shot one hundred and twenty within a year, and then the official massacre was called

off. The few elephants that remain have become a great tourist attraction.

Selous was a most experienced elephant hunter and an authority on their ways, but throughout his life he shot only one hundred and six elephants.

I have seen the tusks laid out on the warehouse floors of Mombasa and Zanzibar, but the finest array I ever set eyes on was not in Africa at all. This treasure was set out only five miles from Charing Cross – twenty thousand tusks in a warehouse at London Docks, awaiting the ivory auctions that would draw buyers from many parts of Europe and the United States.

That was between the wars, and before celluloid and modern plastics had seriously reduced the demand for genuine ivory. A dealer showed me the types of tusks: the “very large” of

one hundred pounds and more down to the “bangle sizes” and tiny “scrivelloes”. Smallest of all are “bagatelle scrivelloes”, used for the purpose indicated by the name.

Elephant ivory is warm and mellow, incomparably superior to all substitutes, and identical with the ivory carried by the hairy mammoths of Siberia thousands of years ago.

Ivory stored for years by African chiefs acquired a sort of yellow patina and was covered with fine cracks. This is the ivory valued by the craftsmen who carve ivory in India and China.

Among the queer finds made by London ivory dealers was an ancient metal spearhead embedded in the centre of a large tusk. Outwardly the tusk appeared to be perfect. Ivory goes on growing all through the life of an

elephant, and this tusk had grown round the spearhead.

Bullets are found in the same way. Dealers also used to recognise the initials of famous hunters. Now, most of the ivory that reaches London in dwindling quantities comes from elephants that have escaped all the hunters and have been found dead in swamp and bush.

On rare occasions a tusk is seen which has been struck by lightning. Elephants seem to be well aware of this risk; they have been observed covering their tusks with their enormous ears while a thunderstorm was at its height.

Some of the old ivory hunters believed that one elephant in a thousand or more carried an “elephant stone” instead of tusks. According to this legend, a tusk less bull elephant

develops a ball of ivory as a result of the deformed tusks growing inwards. Within the ivory ball rests an “ivory pearl”, the rarest stone in the world.

You hear stories of the “elephant stone” all over East Africa, and the fabulous prices paid for them; but I have still to see one in a museum. One of the Indian maharajahs, owner of a jewel collection, is said to have offered half a million dollars in gold for a good specimen of the “elephant stone”.

Freak tusks are fairly common. In the Lamu district of Kenya a six-tusked elephant was seen. One tusk was normal; the other had five separate branches. Such malformations are caused by disease. Spiral tusks have also occurred. An elephant with one tusk is known in North Eastern Rhodesia as a *tondo*, and such eleph-

ants often have a reputation for bad temper. Abnormal development causes pain.

Ivory played a great part in the opening up of Africa. Tippoo Tib’s ivory traders were backed up by armies, and wars were fought for the sake of tusks. Slaves and ivory were inseparable at one time. They must have wept with relief when they reached the coast at Bagamoyo, the old ivory port with the name that means “lay down the burden of your heart”.

However, there were ivory hunters who had no dealings with the slave traders and some of those adventurous spirits were true explorers. John Petherick, who acted as British consul at Khartoum, and the Poncet brothers, were ivory hunters and traders who

ventured where no white man had been before.

Long before Speke reached Lake Victoria, ivory hunters from the Nile had been there; and when Baker discovered Lake Albert he was informed by the tribesmen that unnamed ivory hunters had been there before him.

Naturalists tell us that the elephant started on the scale of evolution as a pig-like animal with a snout, only three feet high. I remember the elephant herds as I saw them from the Lodestars, flying up and down Africa years ago. They looked like frightened mice. The ivory hunters take a different view of them.



## CHAPTER 20

### “JAMBO, BWANA”

“JAMBO, BWANA.” It started a long way down the Great North Road, before I left Northern Rhodesia. “Good morning, master.”

“*Jambo, bwana.*” Thus the Swahili steward greeted me each morning on board the *Liemba* when he opened the door of cabin nine and put down the early tea.

“*Jambo, bwana.*” All the railway stewards and hotel servants opened each new day with the same phrase, all the way through Tanganyika and Kenya, down to the sea. For this is the stronghold of Kiswahili, the *lingua franca* of East Africa, the language spoken by more people than any other African language. At a rough guess, forty million people.

Kiswahili lingers pleasantly in the memory, and phrases are remembered even by casual visitors. It creeps into the talk of every English-speaking person in East Africa, for certain words fit the scene and situation better than English. Kiswahili has borrowed from English and other languages. Sometimes the words are softened, at others the transformations are startling and humorous, as I shall prove to you.

Long ago, in a ship calling at East African ports, I overheard two tiny English children gabbling away in a tongue I could not identify. It was Kiswahili, of course, which they had acquired from their nurses; and it came to them naturally. In just the same way, other little white exiles learnt Hindustani from their ayahs before they could speak English.

I am a fool at languages, but I do not believe in missing anything at meal-times through lack of words. With the aid of a fellow traveller, a Kenya girl who spoke Kiswahili with a sense of poetry almost, I made an effort.

“*Saa ngapi chakula?*” inquires my notebook. “What time lunch?” I learnt to ask for *chai* (tea) and *kahawa* (coffee); and, of course, *spiriti*, a most useful word covering all sorts of liquor.

Of course I am an imposter really, for I cannot speak Kiswahili. But I can talk about it. I know some of the jokes and absurdities and queer origins.

Kiswahili is essentially a Bantu language, a product of Africa, which began to take shape when the first Arabs and Persians settled in East Africa and took native wives. Along

the coast a new race arose from the mingling of the newcomers with the different tribes. These mixed people became Moslems, and in spite of their African blood they were different from the pagan tribes of the interior. Out of the melting pot emerged the Swahilis (derived from the Arabic word *sawahil*, meaning “coast”), and their language was Kiswahili.

It is thought that the Swahilis came into being five hundred years before Christ. Their language naturally absorbed many Arabic words, but the grammar is Bantu. Through the centuries Kiswahili developed until it became the most literary, the most dignified of all Africa’s thousand languages.

Over in the west the Hausa *lingua franca* is a great force; but it cannot be compared with rich and expressive

Kiswahili for precision. Kiswahili is to Africa what French is to Europe. Authorities declare that Kiswahili is one of the twelve most important languages of the world. Certainly you may travel far and wide in Africa with its unfailing aid.

If you ask me to describe a Swahili, however, I am at once in difficulties. The contrasts between Swahilis are so great that they might belong to entirely different races. They vary in colour and features from negro to Arab. Marco Polo remarked: "Their mouths are so large, their noses so turned up, their lips so thick, their eyes so big and bloodshot, that they look like devils."

It is a fact that a Swahili may resemble a character from the Arabian Nights, with the complexion and robes of an Arab; or he may be a flat-nosed, negroid person with black skin and

frizzly hair. The mixture which has gone into the modern Swahili is the final blend of the Zanzibar slave market.

Kiswahili spread inland with the slave traders, so that even in the Belgian Congo there are four million who know it. All along the East African coast, from Somaliland to the Portuguese territory, it is the supreme language. Kiswahili dominates the hundred languages of Tanganyika. Across the sea in Madagascar it is still a great language. Far away in Arabia, on the coast of India, even in Malaya, you will find seafarers who learnt Kiswahili as a trade and nautical language.

Many of the old colonial governments adopted Kiswahili as an official language – the Italians in Somaliland, the British everywhere in East Africa,

the Germans, the Portuguese, the Belgians in the Eastern Congo. Kiswahili has endured all the changes, in war and in peace, from the Red Sea right down to Natal.

Where was the cradle of Kiswahili? It is difficult to settle such a point after more than two thousand years; but Lamu, that old Persian colony, isle of spice and ivory and dhows, is said to be the home of Kiswahili in its purest form. Lamu has the most poetic dialect.

Mombasa takes first place for Kiswahili prose, while Zanzibar (as you might expect) evolved the commercial Kiswahili. Inevitably the Zanzibar dialect has spread more widely than the others. Mogadishu is another very old settlement of Eastern Vikings where the Swahili people and their language may have been born.

Missionaries have greatly assisted the serious study of Kiswahili by producing dictionaries and other works. In these books the vivid phraseology, the wit and beauty of the language may be enjoyed.

Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller of Tangier, brought back word of the Swahili people early in the fourteenth century. When the first Portuguese explorers reached East Africa the whole coastal population from Mogadishu south for two thousand miles to Sofala was speaking Swahili.

It was not until early last century, however, that Henry Salt, an Englishman, sailed round the Cape to Abyssinia, published a short "Sowauli" vocabulary in his "Travels." Krapf, the missionary who discovered Mount Kenya was, another pioneer in this field, and Burton the

explorer collected fifteen hundred words in three Kiswahili dialects. Then came Bishop Edward Steere, who designed and built the Zanzibar cathedral and wrote the most useful Kiswahili work to be published last century. Steere was a printer as well as a missionary. He rescued children from slave dhows, taught them in his Zanzibar school, wrote down the Kiswahili they spoke, and printed a Kiswahili handbook.

Reusch, the Russian missionary whose Kilimanjaro exploits I have described, came to the conclusion that Kiswahili words are three-fifths Bantu, two-fifths Arabic. The grammar is a mixture of the complicated and irregular Bantu and the logical, well-developed Arabic. Kiswahili proved itself to be marvellously well-adapted to the everyday life of the

sophisticated Arab and Persian invaders and the primitive Africans.

No doubt the survival and enormous growth of Kiswahili are due to the fact that it is easy to learn. A sort of "Pidgin Kiswahili" (also known as Kisetler"), serves as a rough means of conversation, like the "Coast Pidgin" of West Africa, when the white man has failed to master Kiswahili. But the real Kiswahili is a most precise and subtle language, euphonious as Italian.

Kiswahili proverbs rightly suggest a leisurely people. "*Haraka, harahaka, haina baraka*" ("hurry, hurry has no blessing") is the slogan of the sweltering land. *Bado*, meaning "not yet", is the reply to a thousand urgent questions; a word the newcomer learns on the day he steps into East Africa.

“If the cat’s away the mouse will reign”, say the Swahilis. “Spilt water cannot be gathered up”. “He who dips his finger in the honey does not dip once only.”

I came across a truly oriental Kiswahili version of carrying coals to Newcastle-“to send dates to Arabia”. Another with an eastern flavour runs: “While the stranger is being praised his palm wine is being watered”.

Remarkable similarities may be found between the humour, the folklore and the fairy tales of Kiswahili literature and the English counterparts. Mothers-in-law come in for the same sarcastic treatment. (“When you chance to meet your mother-in-law, it is then that you happen to be naked”, complains the Swahili.)

Characters such as Puss in Boots and Cinderella crop up in Kiswahili tales, but with different names. Kiswahili folklore is vast, with snakes and African animals, grand viziers and sultans taking the places of the hare and the fox. Tales from the Arabian Nights are still told every day along the Mombasa waterfront.

Kiswahili slang can be melodious. Imported liquor such as whisky and brandy is known as *mje ne wimbi*, “coming with the waves.”

He is a long-winded, plausible fellow, this speaker of Kiswahili. *Kama maji*, as he would say himself – so loquacious that the words flow like water. But his repartee is clever, and his riddles witty. “A necklace on top, red silver in the box”, one will ask. Quickly comes the answer – a pomegranate.

At first sight Kiswahili appears weak in describing time and distance. That is not really the fault of the language, but is due to the complete indifference of the Swahili himself. The word *mbali* means far away; and the weary traveller on *safari* – a beautiful word, that one – has to guess how far away from the tone in which *mbali* is uttered.

Plurals are often formed by the prefix *wa*. The carrier who still marches through the East African bush with his headload is *mpagazi* : carriers are *wapagazi*.

Among the hundreds of resounding words to be found in Kiswahili, I am particularly fond of *zungumza*, (to converse), *zamani* (long ago) and *chezacheza* (to play about). One word which is detested by all who have experienced the limited resources of

East African cookery in the far places is *kuku* (fowl). The white man on leave from some lonely post does not regard any form of chicken, however palatable, as a treat.

Typical of the African words in Kiswahili are *kiboko* (hippo), *kifaru* (rhino), *ng'ombe* (ox) and *tembo* (elephant). You can sense the Arabic in *sheitani* (devil).

Swahili servants do not knock at a door unless trained to do so. They stand on the threshold and call *hodi* (anyone at home?) The reply is *karibu* (come near). I like the long drawn exclamation of surprise – looo! Everyone knows *salaam*.

*Shauri* is an overworked word, firmly adopted by white settlers. Dictionaries give it as “advice, plan, discussion”. It is now used in the wider sense of an

affair, or business. “What happened about that ivory-poaching shauri?” a hunter might ask. Then there is the fatalistic phrase that covers all sorts of affairs and disasters, large and small – *shauri Muungu*, (“it is God’s business”). The best way of avoiding an unwelcome task lies in the simple statement: “That is not my *shauri*”.

Then there is *maradadi*, the Swahili word for finery, used every day among Europeans as a term of admiration.

In recent years, of course, Swahili has had to cope with the queer things brought by the white man. Thus a railway train became *gari la moshi*, literally “carriage of smoke”. A white doctor is *daktari*, as opposed to the *mganga*, the witchdoctor. *Amerikani* is a type of cloth sent to East Africa from the United States in the middle of last

century, two yards having the same value as one sheep.

You still hear natives referring to an aircraft as *balloona*, and it took me a long time to find out why they made no distinction between a Comet and the first of man’s aerial inventions. *Balloona* goes back to 1909, when the American newspaper owner, Mr. W. D. Boyce, took a balloon expedition to Nairobi with the idea of photographing game from the air. The balloon went up, and ever since then every aircraft has been termed a *balloona*. But there is an alternative – *ndege mukumwa*, “big bird”.

Other forms of transport which you may recognise in Kiswahili are *baisekele*, *lori*, and *motokaa*. Railway is *reli*, and a goods-train which carries passengers is a *mixsi*. The ordinary



slow goods-train is known by the sound it makes – *ng’ong’ong*.

Car parts which are easily identified are *spiringi*, *breki*, *rudita* and *tanki ya pietioli*. A motor-bike is a *pikipiki*, while a tractor is also known by its typical noise – *ting’-ating*. A car with a bonnet that opens like a gaping mouth is always *midomo ya mamba*, because it looks like a crocodile.

Not all the adaptations from English have retained the dignity of the original words. Kiswahili demands plenty of vowels. Consider the transformation of blanket into *bilanketi*, glass into *gilassi*, trumpet into *tarumbeta*.

Many borrowed words and phrases become absurd in Kiswahili. Excellent is translated as *furstklasi* and a present is *krismass*. *Manowari* (man-o’-war) is

better. A mail steamer is simply *meli*, and an anchor is *nanga*.

Then there are *bafu* (bath), *biskuti* (biscuit), *buku* (book), *fidla* (violin), *keki* (cake). I can safely leave the industrious student to translate for himself such well-known words as *motoboti*, *tumbako* and *bakhshishi*. *Chisi* (cheese) and *supu* (soup) are simple enough.

But *fleipeni* is baffling until the cook displays the frying-pan. *Hafisi* is a mystery when written, though it sounds like what it is – office.

When a Swahili dresses up and puts on his best socks he talks of *soksi namba wun*. A long “teddy boy” jacket is called *koti oversaizi*, while a popular type of shorts with four pockets is *kaputula forpoketa*. Handkerchief has become *ankachafi*. A dance in the

African style is *ngoma*, but the dance of the white people is *dansi*. Among the white man's medicines which the Swahili greatly admires are *aspirini* and *quinini*. *Sigari* is a cigarette, and the Swahili speaks of a cigar as *smoka*.

Goans from Portuguese India have settled in East Africa. They are known to the Swahilis as *Pilipili Hoho*, which is the name of a very hot soup which the Goans eat.

Portuguese has contributed a number of words to Kiswahili, for example, *bandera* (flag), *sabuni* (soap), *bastola* (revolver) and *padri* (priest). Other words derived from Portuguese are *mvinyo* (wine), *kaja* (from *caxa*, a large box) and *meza* (table).

The French are known to the Swahilis as *Kifaransa* and the Germans as *Kidachi*. Although the Germans held

their large East African colony for many years, their language did not appear to lend itself to adaptation to the same extent as English.

Hindustani has added greatly to the Kiswahili vocabulary, for there were Indian dhows trading with East Africa long before the first Portuguese explorer sailed into those seas. You now hear phrases like *pukka bwana*, which is, of course, the *pukka sahib* of India. Turkish, Syrian, Aramaic and even Hebrew words are found in Kiswahili. Down in Mozambique the Kiswahili dialect reveals a Malayan influence from Madagascar.

East Africa would be a babel without this *lingua franca*. Unlike many of the local tongues, Kiswahili can be understood even when seriously mutilated. It flourishes side by side with Arabic, the language of the Koran; with Urdu

and Gujerati and Cuthi spoken by Asians; with English and with the various brands of French spoken by people from the Seychelles and Madagascar.

Subtle plays by Moliere, the French dramatist, have been translated into Kiswahili without noticeable loss of effect. Kiswahili newspapers give the day's news and are never at a loss for words. If ever the Africans south of the Sahara form a united nation, Kiswahili will be their official language. The Swahili lives in a land of *kesho* (tomorrow), and his language fits the country. *Kesho inshallah* – “tomorrow, God willing”. *Kwa heri*, “good-bye”.

## CHAPTER 21

### LOST CITY OF GEDI

AFRICA'S LOST cities have beckoned to me ever since I read the romantic fiction of Rider Haggard as a boy. I am willing to travel great distances to encounter great mysteries and pit my puny wits against the veil of time. Once in the Kalahari I took part in a search for the elusive lost city there. Thus I was bound to go on from Mombasa to Malindi – and Gedi.

Gedi, the very name of the place, is a mystery. If it is derived from the Arabic *gidah* then it means “buried”. Natives call the ruins Kalepwa, which has been translated as “the ruins that dried up”. Nobody really knows.

Gedi must be seen against the whole background of East Africa's ruined settlements before the deep mystery of

the place can be fully realised. Medieval stone forts and ruins, known as Shirazi, are found at many points along the coast and on the islands offshore.

Kilwa Kisiwani has a sultan's palace and mosques overgrown by the bush. German traders discovered a Persian settlement on Songa Manara, off the southern coast of Tanganyika, early this century. On the beach of this coral isle were found the remains of ancient lighthouses, and many old Chinese coins were recovered from the rocks where junks had been wrecked.

Colonists from the Persian Gulf and Arabia left their decorated mosques and tombs on the shores of many a bay. When the Portuguese first reached East Africa they described a number of flourishing and civilised towns which have since died. But they



Africa's lost cities have beckoned to me ever since I read the romantic fiction of Rider Haggard as a boy.

never mentioned Gedi, the largest of East Africa's lost cities.

Vasco da Gama was within a few miles of Gedi at the end of the fifteenth century, and either did not hear a word of the place or else he did not think of mentioning it. Gedi, surrounded by mysteries, is the great enigma of East Africa.

If you have never heard of Gedi it is because this lost city remained hidden from the eyes and knowledge of white people until about thirty years ago. Africans in the neighbourhood were fully aware of these ruins in the jungle, but they remained silent. Yet here was a wonder of the dark past, mysterious as the stone faces of Easter Island, the palaces of Yucatan, the riddles of Egypt and the enigmas of Cambodia; here was Gedi, overlooked and unexplored.

Why everyone missed Gedi for so long is hard to explain. It is not a tiny village but a whole town, walled and covering more than thirty acres. Still older walls have been traced over a much wider area, so that it is no exaggeration to call Gedi a lost city. The ruins are fifty miles from Mombasa, but only eight miles from the old Arab coast port of Malindi. How could all the many seafarers who called at Malindi through the centuries have missed a flourishing town only eight miles away and only three miles from the coast?

So there is the first Gedi mystery. Search the records as far back as Ptolemy and you will marvel at this blindness. Malindi and Mombasa were charted a thousand years ago. Ibn Batuta, that redoubtable traveller from Tangier, was in East Africa in the

fourteenth century; he wrote of many places, but not of Gedi. Then came the Portuguese in 1498. They built a fort at Malindi and kept a garrison there for two hundred years. No word of Gedi appears in the Portuguese records.

Two famous British survey ships, *Leven* and *Barracouta*, called at Malindi early last century and charted the coast. Apparently their shore parties never saw Gedi, for the place does not appear anywhere in the two volume work these naval surveyors compiled.

So the great hush rested over Gedi until 1926, when a young British official – more inquisitive than most – thrust his way into the jungle close to the Malindi road.

He found the bloated trunks of baobab trees rising from the loopholed city walls. Within the walls he sensed a city smothered by the tropical forest. Gigantic roots grew across the choked streets. Mosques were hidden by creepers. The lush growth of the centuries had covered an unknown page in Africa's story.

One enormous tree had raised its trunk and branches in the midst of a building later identified as the ceremonial bath house of a sultan's palace. Coral homes gave way to merciless roots, tendrils invaded archways and verandas. Towers crumbled as the invading trees strangled the masonry. Powerful fig-trees came up through floors and pavements. Vines festooned coffee houses, and market places were thick with scrub.

I saw large parts of Gedi looking exactly like that. After the discovery the governor Sir Edward Grigg inspected Gedi, and a little clearing was done. But even now only a small area has been saved from the merciless forest. Fortunately it is enough to give the visitor a good idea of the lost city.

Mr. James Kirkman, a qualified archaeologist with previous experience in Persia and Mesopotamia, was appointed warden in 1948, and systematic work started. A well near the north-east gate of Gedi was selected for two reasons. The labourers needed water, and Kirkman hoped that the well might yield relics of the lost city. Archaeologists often concentrate on wells when they find them, for the different levels sometimes give approximate dates. Moreover, all sorts

of unpredictable and fascinating objects fall into wells.

This well contained fragments of pottery, jars and bowls and beakers, possibly thrown in by children. Some of the pottery was Chinese of early twelfth century patterns. Japanese pottery was identified as late twelfth to fifteenth century. There were also some Chinese charms which could not be dated.

Kirkman reported that the most interesting point about the well was that it had been filled in deliberately. Inside the city of Gedi the many wells have retained their parapets. The well at the gate had no parapet; the parts were found at the bottom of the shaft. Kirkman concluded that the well had been destroyed when the people of Gedi were expecting an attack.



Year after year the patient excavation went on, so that today you can gain a faint impression of life in the lost city. Important buildings have emerged from the jungle.

First there is the Great Mosque, with pillars which once supported a roof of coral tiles. The pulpit, the women's section, the veranda, the coral bosses for scraping the soles of the feet, can all be seen clearly. But huge trees now stand where the priest once chanted the words of the Koran.

Next comes the large palace with its monumental arch, sunken reception court, rooms and stores, kitchens and lavatories. (I think this was the first time I had seen a stone lavatory, but in the East African climate the seats might not be as cold as they looked.) The women's quarters are well defined, with their salon or *haramlik*.

The palace includes a group of tombs with a pillar tomb beautifully preserved. My guide pointed out the niches in the bathroom walls, possibly designed for lamps.



Next comes the large palace with its monumental arch, sunken reception court, rooms and stores, kitchens and lavatories.

One long court with a platform may have been the Gedi market, or possibly the slave market.

Thirteen houses have been excavated, and the picturesque names given to them were based on articles found amid the ruins. Thus you have the House of the Cowries, identified as a fourteenth century building; the House of the Cistern in which the bathroom has a cistern filled from outside through a hole in the wall; and the House of the Sunken Court with an anteroom with seats round three sides. I also remember the House of the Iron Lamp.

Five or six mosques, apart from the Great Mosque, have been identified, but only one of these – the Mosque of the Long Conduit – has been cleared.

I shall remember Gedi as the city of baobabs. Seeds of a baobab make a hair wash which is still used by Arab and African women in East Africa. The seeds are thrown on the rubbish heap. So you are likely to find baobabs where people have once lived, and many ruined towns in East Africa have their baobab groves.

Kirkman found other clues during his years of excavation. Four skeletons were recovered from a large well near the south gate. Two Chinese coins were identified, one of the twelfth and one of the early seventeenth century. Many cooking-pots were found, and some glass and metal-work of Arab origin. Such valuables as a pair of scissors, decorated ivory and a string of beads suggested that some people left Gedi hurriedly, before they could gather all their possessions. Bowls

were immured in the various mosques, and some of these have been recovered.

Many of Gedi's treasures are displayed in a little museum on the spot. Here you may puzzle over white porcelain, blue and white celadon, brown and black stoneware from China, Persian beads, carnelian beads from India, African shell beads, African cooking-pots.

Before the Gedi ruins were protected a number of relics were removed by casual visitors. I was told that many clues to Gedi's past had found their way into Arab and European homes in Malandi and Mombasa and even further afield.

Africans seem to have left Gedi alone ever since the place, was abandoned. A few natives went into Gedi at

various times and never came out again. Inevitably the people round about Gedi speak of ghosts. I do not believe in ghosts, but I know that a large python was killed among the ruins on the day I was there. Before the old wells were cleared and marked, unwary natives must have fallen into them and perished. Elephant and buffalo have invaded the ruins, and they know how to dispose of an irritating human.

However, the Africans prefer a supernatural tale. They are convinced that Gedi is haunted by a sultan who has entered into the skin of a snake. Long ago they used to leave offerings among the ruins when they wanted rain or fine crops or children. Then came the sultan (probably an especially large python) and they kept away from Gedi.

One of the more impressive graves is believed by the tribesmen to be the sultan's tomb. Here, they say, is treasure. But they have never dug for it, and strongly disapprove of any investigation of the ruins. Death comes to the person who takes away the smallest relics of Gedi.

The late Sir Ali bin Salim, when *Liwali* of Mombasa, used to tell the story of an Arab who ridiculed the legendary curse and fired at a piece of blue Gedi pottery. That night the Arab dropped dead.

I think the weird screams heard in Gedi at night may be safely explained by the families of monkeys living in the trees. The favourite ghost is a short man wearing a turban and white robe. This apparition soon towers above you, a white giant rising from a tomb and vanishing only when he has scared

the wits out of you. Then there are ghostly pathways that lead you into a maze of bush and suddenly fade out. Even more disconcerting are the trees that burst into flame for no good reason.

Mr. David Lessels, a Scot who hitch-hiked through Africa in the nineteen-fifties, decided to spend a night in the Gedi forest. He had heard the tribesmen whispering of the ghosts; but this old soldier of the Black Watch ignored all warnings.

“The headman of the nearest native village was horrified, and told me that none of his people would go near Gedi at night”, Lessels recalled. “I shall never do it again. That night taught me the meaning of wild and unreasonable fear.”

White people will tell you in all seriousness that photographs of Gedi often reveal ghostly figures and faces. My camera was evidently immune to such influences.

Gedi has only one building with a date which is beyond controversy. This is a tomb with an Arabic inscription and the Moslem year A.H. 802, which corresponds with A.D. 1399.

I said that Gedi lies three miles from the coast, but it is situated on a creek. A massive stone wall, skilfully designed, runs down to the floor of the creek, shutting off a stretch of water from the ocean. Engineers have stated that thousands of slaves must have worked for years on this wall. It seems to have been part of Gedi's defence; but at a later period the wall appears to have been breached to allow dhows to sail

right up the creek. At low tide, parts of the wall are two feet below the surface. It used to be possible to cross the creek by means of the wall.

There is an alternative theory. Some people claim to have discovered piers or wharves below the surface, and they declare that the wall formed a breakwater to protect Gedi's harbour.

Gedi has obviously had more than one life, and some say the city lived three times. Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, the archaeologist who sank a few shafts at Gedi between the wars, thought there was an old town of dressed stone below the surface that might go back as far as the Phoenicians. They sailed round Africa, according to legend, six hundred years before Christ. So the first Gedi may have been a Phoenician colony founded as a result of that voyage. Evidence in support of this

theory is lacking. Leakey found signs of Persian occupation. He declared that Gedi's temples and tombs were those of Shirazi sultans, and that Gedi was one of their early seats of culture.

Leakey found an ingenious explanation for the complete absence of references to Gedi in the old East African history and literature. He said that Gedi was known in the past as Melinde; not the Malindi of Vasco da Gama but the old Melinde or Melind of Milton's "Paradise Lost":

Nor could his eye not ken  
The empire of Negus to its utmost  
port  
Erococo and the less maritime  
kings  
Mombasa and Quiloa and Melind,  
And Sofala, thought Ophir, to the  
realm  
Of Congo and Angola farther south.

Melinde was indeed an old city. It sent ambassadors (with a gift of a giraffe) to China early in the fifteenth century. Many early travellers mention the place, so that the theory that Melinde was Gedi, and that modern Malindi was built eight miles away, is not a fantastic theory.

Mr. Edward Rodwell, who studied Gedi before Kirkman came on the scene, found evidence of two and possibly three different occupations. He thought the city wall and certain buildings which still survive were put up by the first or second occupants. They used dressed stone, coral and grey mortar. Their sanitary pits, water conduits, all their work showed that they were skilled craftsmen. But the last people of Gedi were poor builders. Their houses crumbled, and are now

represented only by mounds scattered about the town.

Rodwell rejected the Phoenician theory. He thought that the Persians built the solid Gedi between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1350. Centuries later came the Arabs, who found the place in decay and repaired the wall. The dated tomb, said Rodwell, was obviously of a different type of construction from the older buildings.

Rodwell saw in the loopholes of the city wall a clue to the date. He was convinced that these loopholes had been made by the Arabs when they redesigned the wall, and that they indicated a people who possessed fire-arms. There is a local tradition that Arabs were living at Gedi as recently as the end of the sixteenth century.

Professor le Fleur and Miss Fleming, archaeologists of the British Association, visited Gedi in 1929. They formed the opinion that Gedi was from four hundred to six hundred years old, but would not venture any more detailed theory in the absence of excavations.

It is possible that the first Gedi was not built by foreign invaders at all, but by some African race inhabiting the coastline long before the first foreigners arrived

There has grown up in recent years a belief that Africans have been responsible for much more than modern science has imagined. African history is full of gaps. Some ruins have been ascribed by different authorities to many different races. Recent evidence suggests that ancient Africans were capable of fine buildings and other works of art.



Centuries ago the Portuguese explorers described splendid African kingdoms which had vanished or become debased when the explorers of last century reached them. Why did the courts of Monomotapa and Benin descend to savagery between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries? There is a gap which no historian has bridged. Was it disease, or war, or the slave trade ?

Kenya's earliest known people were the Gumba, a pigmy race living in holes in the ground, escaping from enemies by means of tunnels. They could not have built Gedi, but a far superior tribe, the Baganda, may have lived there.

Once the Baganda lived on the coast near Mombasa, until they were driven inland by the Arabs. Many of them are of Hamitic stock. Their buildings in

the present Uganda are much more decorative and comfortable than the average African hut. So there is a theory that the Baganda either built or occupied Gedi for a time.

By far the most weighty opinion on Gedi, of course, is that given by Kirkman, the warden of Kenya's coast historical sites. He speaks with the authority of a professional archaeologist who has worked at Gedi for years.

Kirkman declares that Gedi was founded in the twelfth century of the Christian era and rebuilt, with new town walls, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Pottery found in the "pre-mosque" levels at Gedi, the lowest levels, is pure African. It is neither Bantu nor Swahili, however, but it may be of

Galla origin. Thus it is possible that the real founders of Gedi were the Galla, the interesting pagan Hamites who invaded Abyssinia.

Kirkman found a strong resemblance between the pre-Bantu pottery of Gedi and certain Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe relics. The ribbed ornaments of Gedi recalled the sherds of black ribbed ware found in the upper level at Zimbabwe. A bead found with the ribbed ware in the Zimbabwe acropolis also resembled a Gedi bead.

It is possible, says Kirkman, that the pre-Bantu coastal people may have been middlemen between the Arab traders and the gold-mining kings of the interior. As the pre-Bantu pottery was found only at the lowest levels, it seems likely that the people who made it disappeared from the Gedi area.

Kirkman says that the name of Gedi is based on Gede or Geden, given to the place by the Wasanya, who are primitive hunters speaking the Galla language. They may be descendants of the original coast people.

Arabs built the Gedi which you see in ruins in the forest today, and abandoned it in the first half of the seventeenth century. During the centuries of human occupation, Gedi traded chiefly with the Middle East, but also with countries as far away as China.

Why was Gedi founded? And why was it abandoned? Here are two more mysteries with many possible answers. Gedi probably arose because it had good water. Mida Greek on the coast, the natural place for the building of a new settlement, has no good water.

Reusch, the Cossack historian and Kilimanjaro climber, noted a tradition that in the year 1587 the cannibal Wazimba tribe (related to the Zulus) appeared on the coast and massacred three thousand people at Kilwa. They came accidentally to the fortified city of Gedi, set fire to the gates at night and entered. Most of the Gedi population fled, and those who remained were eaten. Reusch points out that the ruined gates and walls of Gedi still reveal signs of the fire.

After the cannibals departed the people returned to Gedi and rebuilt the town on a smaller scale. Reusch was informed by the Africans who narrated the tradition that the Portuguese helped to rebuild Gedi. The new Gedi was so much smaller, however, that a number of people were transferred to Mombasa.

Leakey thought the decay of Gedi was caused by a river changing its course and depriving Gedi of fresh water. Others have suggested an epidemic or pestilence that wiped out so many people that the survivors departed. There is a story that a tribe from Somaliland stormed the walled city and put the inhabitants to death.

It is a fact that neighbouring Malindi lost much of its prosperity when the sultan moved to Mombasa in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Gedi, as a satellite, may have fallen into the same decay.

Kirkman declared that Gedi was abandoned because the soil became exhausted. He found wind-blown sand in the old dust of the town. The Portuguese recorded their astonishment at the meat and grain they saw at Malindi, an abundance which is not

found there today. Gedi may have gone downhill with Malindi. Kirkman supports the theory that the southern arm of the Sabaki River may have dried up, thus depriving Gedi of its position as an outlet for the trade of the interior.

So the forest ran riot until it became a tangle in which the lost city could hardly be distinguished among the shadows. A whole town surrendered to the African jungle. No wonder the atmosphere of Gedi is weird even in full daylight. No wonder so many people talk of ghosts. No wonder even the archaeologists hesitate before opening the locked doors of the past, the tombs of Gedi. The ghosts of the town seem to hold back the men with picks and spades.

“*Jambo bwana!*” So I awoke in Malindi, if indeed I had slept at all, and became aware of a white gown in my open doorway and black arms bearing the tea-tray to my bedside in the dawn.

Through my window I can see the fronded palms and I can smell the red jasmine blossoms. Over on the headland stands the padrao in honour of Vasco da Gama. Close by there stands the oldest Christian church in Africa. They are careening a dhow on the beach, and landing fish of miraculous splendour.

But I am looking beyond Malindi now, past the lost city, down the road, the Great North Road which brought me to this far country. And of all the queer scenes, of all the people I have met, I am thinking of the Man from Leicester Square.

He was running a bookshop in a small mining town very close to the Congo border. I spent an evening with him, a Cockney on the Congo border.

Some Londoners take fragments of London with them when they go to live in the wilds. You can see a Victorian street-lamp from London Bridge in Swaziland; you can hear a London barrel-organ playing the “Lambeth Walk” on a Rhodesian farm; you can discover all sorts of relics in unexpected places, reminders of beloved London placed there by Cockneys in exile.

My friend of the book-shop was different. He had surrounded himself with African carvings, African pictures. I asked him where he had worked in London, and he told me: “In a furniture shop in Leicester Square”.

It seemed a strange transition. “Don’t you sometimes wish you were back in Leicester Square?” I inquired.

“Never”, he declared. “I’ll never go back. I’m better off here than ever I was in my life before. And just think of the English climate!”

Well, I hope the Congo border gives him that happiness for the rest of his life; but I cannot help wondering. Good luck, I say, to all who live along the Great North Road in a changing Africa.

Some places will not change. My thoughts turn to Masanta on the western shore of Bangweulu, where Livingstone camped when he first saw the lake. A chief was buried at Masanta, and his men left a spear and axe of Arabic design on the grave. White men hate to sleep at Masanta,

for they say the tent canvas beats  
against the guy-ropes on windless  
nights, and the place is full of ghosts.

But there are ghosts everywhere along  
the Great North Road. Memories are  
ghosts.

THE END

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Jansen **Van Rensburg**  
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Col. J. H. **Venning**  
Von Lettow

Captain **von Prince**  
Von Roeder  
Count Eric **von Rosen**  
Lieutenant Baron **von Zelewsky**

Wachagga people  
Wagogo people  
Wanderobo people  
Wangoni people  
Wankie  
Poulett **Weatherley**  
White Fathers  
Harry **Wolhuter**  
Tommy **Wood**  
Dr. E. B. **Worthington**

Zanzibar  
Zanzibar chests  
Zanzibar doors